

SOUTH AFRICAN CINDERELLA

BY THE SAME AUTHOR:

GAMBIA AND BEYOND

BEYOND THE SKYLINE

THREE ROUNDS RAPID



AFRICAN SHEPHERD BOY WITH A KARAKUL LAMB

SOUTH AFRICAN CINDERELLA

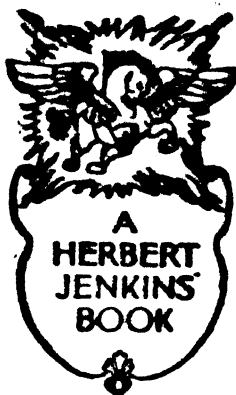
A Trek through Ex-German West Africa

BY

REX HARDINGE

ILLUSTRATED

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To
ROBERT L. SOMMERVILLE
who made possible this unconventional
expedition from Capetown to
Ovamboland.

Also I want to thank all those optimists, pessimists, friends (especially J. D. Hunt, L. E. Pratt and P. M. Haydon), relations, strangers, alarmists, officials, busybodies, and others who helped me on my way ; and to acknowledge my debt to F. Nink of Windhoek, and O. E. Watts of Southsea, for their help with the pictures in this book.

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SOUTH AFRICAN CINDERELLA

CHAPTER I

AGAIN AFRICA

I

WHEN I left Africa in 1933 I was three-parts drunk, because that was the only way of bluffing the port doctor into failing to observe that I was almost dead with fever and dysentery. Africa had tried my endurance to the limit that time and brought me near to death in a cannibal cooking-pot, and I remember vowing that I would stay away. I travelled back to England, fourth-class, on a French boat, and I lived almost entirely on bread and oranges, while I told myself that I hated Africa.

"No more Africa for me! I'm going to settle in England and be respectable," I told the French soldiers who were my companions in the ship's hospital; and between fever-shakes, they agreed that man was meant to live with houses both sides of the street and a pub at the corner.

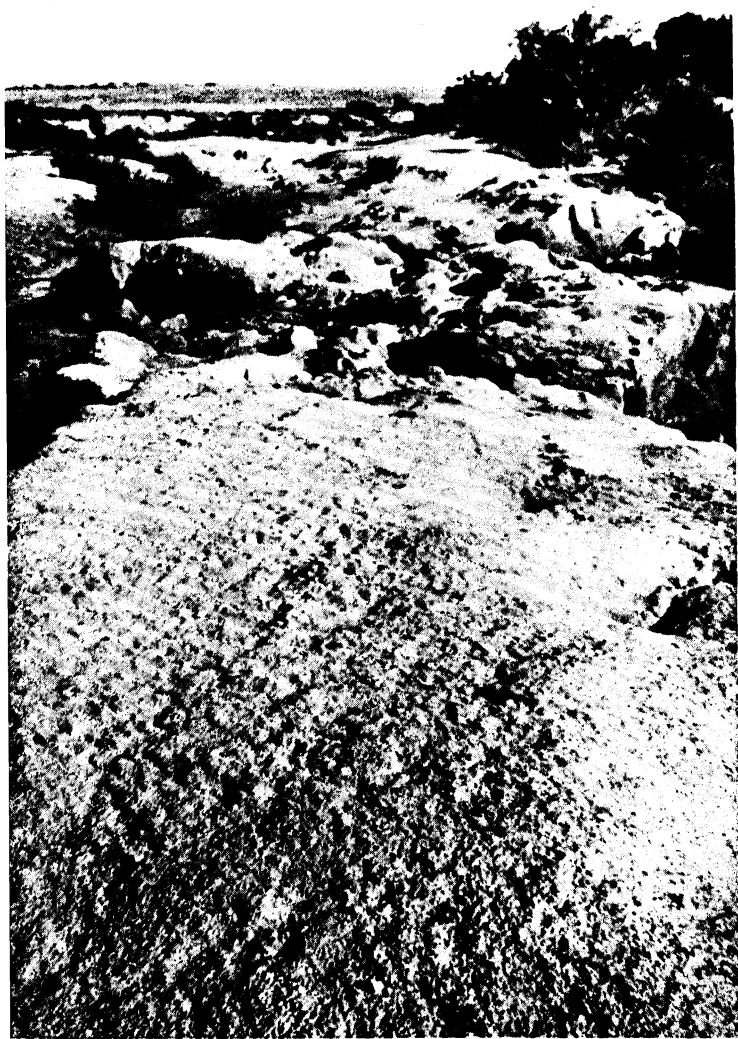
But here am I, writing this in Capetown. The tranquil, hidden places of Africa, unspoilt by tourists, not yet desecrated by the march of civilization, the lonely farms and mines, the quaint native kraals, the scattered towns beyond the skyline, all called me back.

Spring has put myriad-tinted flowers in the yellow wastes of the veld, fresh green in the bush,

new coats on many of the wild things which roam there, and an itch to be up and going into my boots. I am eager to follow once more the dusty, seemingly endless roads and the little winding paths, through air which does not give the impression of being twice-breathed and does not smell of petrol fumes. I want to sample again the intriguing uncertainty, to know that each day might bring anything from long hours of steady plodding onwards towards the distant horizon, unbroken in their monotony, to some stupendous adventure at grips with Nature in the raw. I want to forget again that clocks and time-tables and calendars exist. Days must be simply stages in a trek through all the myriad spells of the veld, the mountains and the desert, as ever-changing and interesting as the pages of a book, full of mystery, unexpected pleasures of colour and sound, barbed with death for the unwary. I want to get away from the crowd, back to lonely trails, camp-fires in place of modern electric stoves, the spice of danger which must always be present in the bush, and all the simplicity of life on trek.

Only those who have sampled it can appreciate how refreshing it is to shed all the trappings and formalities, the helter-skelter bustle of civilization for a while. To me it always compares with a bath and a quiet rest after a strenuous game.

I suppose I should have known all along that I could not stay away from Africa. I was a very small boy, my parents tell me, when I first announced my intention of walking across Africa, and the only good marks I collected at school were for geography when Africa was the subject.



THE ROAD TO THE NORTH

I have not achieved that walk yet, but I have poked an inquisitive nose into many corners south of Suez, and now a trek through the land which was formerly German West Africa lies ahead of me.

I have conditions to study in a corner of Africa which is a bone of contention among statesmen in far-distant cities who have never seen Africa, but who, by fixing seals and signatures to documents, can change the destinies of thousands of simple people.

South-West Africa, "German West" as it is still marked on old maps (and many new ones recently printed in Germany)—the land between Angola and the Orange River, the Kalahari Desert and the sea—is the despised little sister of South Africa. To some it is a memory of a swift, uncomfortable campaign in the early days of the Great War; others connect it vaguely with diamonds; the Germans covet it; South African politicians despise it, but realize that they cannot afford to cast it off.

"It is a land fit only for Bushmen and goats," said a South African politician recently.

"It is nothing but a slag heap—a ghastly place, without surface water—nothing but mile upon mile of desolation! You'll never get through," I was told in Capetown when I first announced my intention of venturing off the beaten track to explore this Cinderella-land.

Travellers passing along the coast, on their way to and from somewhere else, seeing only the immediate surroundings of the two ports, Walvis Bay and Luderitz, foster the belief that the territory consists of nothing but sand-dunes and desolation.

But what actually lies behind the barren, unprepossessing coastline? Who are the people who live there? What do they do? The Germans once ruled there; they want to return.

This new expedition of mine was actually born in Germany, in a similar birthplace to the Nazi movement, a brewery in Munich. There I heard talk of the former German possessions in Africa. Men spoke of South-West Africa, not scornfully as a Cinderella nobody desired, but as a territory of great potential wealth. The Germans want it back. I heard that wish expressed many times, and backed with a formidable determination to make it come true.

Are they content with only wishing? As I trek north beyond the Orange River I hope to find the answer to that question and to many more.

Above all, I want to learn what the natives feel about the future of the land that is their home. All that I know at present is their names, for this is a new corner of Africa to me—the Damaras, the Hottentots, the Bushmen, the Hereros, the Ovambo, the Bastards—what of their future? And, incidentally, what of their present and past? The world knows little about the latter and, one might almost say, cares little about the former. But the Bushmen and the Damaras, strange people who both exist as tribal entities only within the borders of South-West Africa, possibly represent all that remains of the original inhabitants of Southern Africa; while the Hereros and the Ovambos present the ethnologist with intriguing problems of their own. It has even been suggested, with reasonable proof to back the theory, that they are descendants of Vandals

from East Prussia who took the wrong turning away back in history.

But the people of South-West Africa, and their problems, lie ahead in the future, while I sit writing in Capetown. I stood on the fo'c'sle-head of the ship which brought me here, right up in the peak of the bows, and watched the tail-end of Africa grow from a single light into what looked like the sky reversed—a dark blanket dotted with points of light. The night was misty, but stars shone through to match the lights of Capetown—the Tavern of the Seven Seas, as sailors long ago named this favourite port of call—and I stayed on the fo'c'sle-head until those stars paled out. It was a night for romance, but my companion also succumbed to a greater charm—Africa. I doubt if we spoke more than ten sentences. We both felt small and unimportant, while our minds were going beyond those lights to the real Africa behind.

II

Ports invariably provide surprises, so one of the first people I met in Capetown was a man I formerly knew in Bombay. American by birth, seaman by profession, world-wanderer and jack-of-all-trades by choice, I have never known him by any other name than George. But there is nothing surprising about that, for when I cannot remember a man's name, I always call him George. This was probably George XXII, and there have been many since. I first met him when he landed in Bombay off a boat from the Persian Gulf, and the meeting-place was a night-club

■

which is better forgotten. We were both new to Bombay and somebody insisted on introducing us to *moorghichop*, which we thought would be a new thrill, but it turned out to be curried chicken.

Anyway, here we both were in Capetown, both with more important matters than food under consideration. George had come in on a whale-catcher from Western Australia, having been at sea for five and a half months without leaving the ship. He was eager to make up for lost time, but I made him take me to the docks and introduce the little fleet of vessels which had constituted his entire world for so long.

Six of the quaint, sturdy little whale-catchers, like enlarged Thames tugs, were in dock, and their mother-ship, the *Frango*, had just arrived. All showed many traces of long months at sea without touching land. The men also were marked by being cooped up for so long. Many of them seemed lost, almost scared, as they looked out across the docks, or ventured on to the jetty to test for themselves just exactly what firm land did feel like underfoot.

They were a good-tempered, happy crowd, of mixed ages, types and breeds, but the men on the *Frango* were not quite so pleased with the world as the crews of the catchers, for the mother-ship was sailing on to America almost immediately, so the crew were not allowed even one night's "blind" ashore. After the months of monasticism that they have experienced the sirens (type: human, female) must call to them in vain.

The principal result of this ruling seemed to be that the decks of the *Frango* were converted

into something resembling a jumble sale, for there were guards at the gangways, so, as "the mountain could not come to Mahomet," the dealers had gone aboard. Busy shopkeepers had brought their wares and spread them from stem to stern to tempt the crew, and when I went up the gangway with George the men were swarming round astounding pyramids of all those items of clothing and peculiar luxuries that exiled men begin to forget exist.

Suits, hats, shoes, vivid shirts, rainbow ties and socks, even gloves and walking-sticks and umbrellas, together with suitcases and kitbags, in which to pack the purchases—all these were like manna to men who had touched at no port since leaving Norway almost six months before.

I caught the prevailing enthusiasm. When salesmen dashed at me, extolling the virtues of this suit, of that hat—interlock underwear, bordered handkerchiefs (any monogram added free)—I began to haggle in real earnest, until I suddenly remembered that I had not come from exile, that I wanted none of these things. But I was able to advise a fresh-faced youngster, who seemed to have lost none of the spontaneous gaiety of youth on the long voyage, as to the rival merits of various hues in socks, when viewed in conjunction with the shirts he had already purchased. Meanwhile George bought a walking-stick—why only the vendor knows, for George was off to the Antarctic almost immediately, and they do not use malacca canes with silver knobs down there—or do they?

Whaling men in mufti seem to scorn anything nautical. By their tweed suits, cloth caps (worn primly straight on the top of the head), and

vast briar pipes, will you know them, unless, as is almost bound to happen, you mistake them for anything else but sailors.

The six whale-catchers, with their intriguing names—*Treern*, *Thorarinn*, *Nebb*, *Thorvard*, *Enern* and *Ornern*—were going south for the Antarctic season within a month, but the youngster with the socks was one of a select party that was to return to Europe by the next mail-ship, his adventuring ended for a while. Men who have been cooped up overlong with the same few companions open up swiftly to strangers, so the lad confided in me that he was looking forward on the voyage home to finding a different variety of romance to that which must always be connected with small ships and the open sea. He also admitted that he was sure to be seasick.

The *Frango* is too small to accompany her catchers into the Antarctic, so they must attach themselves to another, more capacious mother, while she sails on to the United States with her load of, approximately, £130,000 worth of whale-oil, and the honour of a season's catch along the West Australian coast of over 1500 whales.

She showed many traces of what she had endured during that season, as did her brood, for all steel-work was fantastically rusted, while there were bands of rust, strangely patterned, across the wooden decks. George told me that most of the time the decks are awash, and that one soon forgets what it feels like to be entirely dry. This reminded him of his thirst, but before we moved on, he took me for a brief, venturesome dive below decks on the *Frango*, and there, under the flensing decks where the whales are dissected, I discovered a mass of boilers and refining tanks,

for the factory-ship (to give her her correct designation) must be entirely self-supporting. The six catchers which form her brood, kill and bring in the whales ; then she does the rest, while they go out looking for more.

With due apologies to the designers, I came away from the *Frango* with the feeling that I had experienced a Heath-Robinson nightmare. Pipes and tanks, twisting, jutting, protruding, winding, everywhere, and over and above everything was a smell which is indescribable. Whalers are undoubtedly a class of men apart, or they could not live with that odour.

One does not expect to find motor-tyres in use on a ship at sea, but I saw even them on the *Frango*. They were linked together with supple pieces of wood, several vast lorry-tyres so joined forming a serviceable fender, to be inserted between the ship and the catchers when they come alongside for stores on the whaling-grounds. I was told that dead whales make the best fenders, but in these economical times motor-tyres are used as the next best thing.

After that I was prepared for anything, but on George's boat I ate for the first (and last) time some dried whale-meat. When I say that I ate it, I mean that I blunted my teeth on something which resembled some peculiar form of policeman's truncheon. It was black and hard and cylindrical, but actually it tasted no worse than many kinds of biltong to be found in Africa (some of which I was to become dependent on during stages of my trek), and strangely enough, it was about the only thing on the ship which did not smell to high heaven of the vessel's trade.

George also showed me the first electric harpoon

ever to be seen at an African port, although they have long been objects of discussion (and usually derision) among the many whalers who forgather there. The normal harpoon is a titanic affair, weighing 150 lbs., but the electric model tips the scale at under 25 lbs.

"It's not the blade that does the killing," explained George, in language shorn of technicalities. "You see, in place of the usual manilla rope attached to the harpoon, this dingus has copper wire. When the whale's hit the juice is switched on. It travels along the wire to the harpoon and give the big fellow one almighty shock—and that's that !

"Although, mind you, it takes two minutes for the current to reach the whale's brain and produce death ; and if the harpoon doesn't go in good and deep, the current doesn't get to the brain and nothing happens—except that we're one harpoon the less ! Also, if the harpoon sticks its point through the body and comes against the water, nothing happens ! In fact, it's a great idea, but doesn't always work out according to schedule. I remember once—it was my first experience with one of these—I pressed the button to give the whale the works, and that was the last I knew for a bit. There was a flash of blue light—and my mates picked me up from where I fell, and I was lucky to get off with a broken arm and a couple of cracked ribs ! "

Another gunner confirmed all that George told me, and added some more of his own. He belonged to that thoughtful brigade of men of all nations who must interest themselves in international affairs, even though they only see a newspaper about once in six months. He declared

glumly that, with four nations in the field, he did not see much future for whaling in the Antarctic, and that he had heard from a dependable source that Japan is building 20,000-ton factory-ships, and that Germany is both building and chartering ships of much bigger tonnage than the *Frango* and her kind.

I came away from the gallant, battered fleet with the conviction that the industry will never die out for lack of such men as George and his mates, eager for the loneliness and the strange charm of a whaler's life, but the real problem is—for how long will there be enough whales to go round?

George and I had a solemn drink about that, and then parted, he to go his way and I to go mine. His way lies south to the Antarctic, and he insisted that he had found his vocation at last, but I shall not be surprised to meet him next market-gardening in Hampshire or selling soap in Singapore.

After that interlude I plunged into a welter of last-moment preparations. I decided to trek in a new way—at least, not quite new, for I covered many miles in the same fashion years ago. I decided to buy an ordinary bicycle, cut my kit to the minimum, dispense with such doubtful luxuries as native attendants, and follow those winding paths and narrow trails that are beyond the reach of the most adventurous of motorists.

I have often thought that the bicycle has never been properly exploited by those who seek distant places beyond the railways, particularly in a country like Africa, where there are so many handicaps for the traveller. Disease often cancels out horse transport; carriers are not easy to recruit in these

modern times, and, at the best, will seldom trek farther than from village to village; petrol is prohibitive in price in places, and, anyway, Africa hides her real treasures beyond the reach of the motorist; so I put my trust in a bicycle. I want to travel faster than a walking pace, and to be entirely independent of all except myself, so only a bicycle seems to fit my requirements. There may be drawbacks to the plan; only the future can show me those.

Soon I will be off. Spring is in the air and I never did like Capetown. It has beautiful surroundings, fine shops, luxurious trackless trams, cafés, bars, theatres, cinemas, and attractive, cosy dwellings, but it is not Africa. All that lies behind the mountains is calling too strongly for there to be any enjoyment in synthetic thrills in a darkened cinema.

This is a strange world—a few short weeks ago I sat in an English garden and wrote a story about Africa; now I sit under a rose-arch in Capetown, with Table Mountain looming over me and seeming so close as to be oppressive, and I must turn my attention to a story about London which must catch the outgoing mail.

III

Ambrose found Sir Walter for me.

Ambrose is the houseboy and general factotum at the little boarding-house, high up Kloof street and close under the mountain, that I have made my headquarters. How a large, somnolent-looking Shangaan native from Mozambique, who

gravitated to Capetown by way of various mine-kitchens in the Transvaal, acquired the name of Ambrose, I do not know, but he might have done worse. The roster of natives on my Transvaal farm some years ago included such gems of nomenclature as Tinribs, Eggs and Next-week, while a solemn old grandfather answered proudly to the name of Bugs.

I did not even know Ambrose's name until after he had discovered Sir Walter. He announced this find by breathing huskily in my ear as he put the soup before me: "I catch'um bike for you! *Thirty bob!*"

After lunch he elucidated. He had found a shop which had a second-hand "Raleigh" bicycle for sale for thirty shillings. So desirable a bargain was not to be missed, so he had booked it for me. In fact, he fetched my hat and had it waiting in the hall, so that, before my lunch was properly masticated, I was hounded down to the bottom end of Long Street to see the bike. On arrival at the shop I discovered that Ambrose had made sure of the booking by instituting a waiting-list. Not only had he given the vendor my name, but had added his own and that of the proprietor of the boarding-house. Furthermore, so that the bicycle should not be spirited away, he had detailed sundry miscellaneous relatives and friends to keep an eye on it, so the vendor was probably relieved when I decided that Sir Walter would suit my purpose, for he must have found that solemn crowd of watchers stationed by his door rather trying.

I bought a massive front carrier of the type used by errand-lads, also a strong rear carrier, and had new tyres fitted and a couple of spares

included. I wished that an old Scotch pal of mine had been in town, for he was the lad who, on a rare visit to a city after months spent together in the back-veld, spent an hour and forty minutes haggling with an Indian storekeeper down a back street, and finally bought a suit of clothes, shoes, hat and underwear, for less than I paid on the same occasion for the lunch we ate to celebrate his bargains.

Bicycles are registered the same as cars in Cape Province, so I had various forms to fill in ; but late that evening, when his work was done, Ambrose went down town in his best clothes, and returned proudly mounted upon Sir Walter. There was no garage attached to the boarding-house, so we stabled the bike in a chicken-house, and Ambrose polished until every scrap of metal-work shone like glass, expending on Sir Walter the polish and zeal which were intended for the cutlery and door-knobs of the establishment.

I bought a gun down a back street (more forms to fill in and permits to collect), stores in various places, and then began to sort out kit. It is easy to talk about travelling light, but when one begins to consider essentials for a long trip through country which is largely desolate, and then view the resulting heap in conjunction with one ordinary pedal cycle, the result is a severe blow.

I first made a heap of the things that must go with me ; then realized that there would not be room on the bicycle for me, and the wheels would not go round. So I divided my heap into two. I put a few things on one side.

"I can manage without those, I suppose," I decided. Before long the second heap—those things which I must do without—was the larger,

and still the bicycle looked like a cross between a Christmas tree and a poor joke. Those who have tried strapping goods upon a pedal cycle in confined quarters will appreciate that this period of preparation was far from painless, and the first blood of the expedition was shed on the floor of the chicken-house. When the bicycle did not fall over and savage me with handle-bar or pedal, I fell over the bicycle ; and still Heap Number Two swelled alarmingly.

I had to bear in mind that on a trip through country barbed with death for the unwary, "one hundred per cent efficient" must be the brand on the whole outfit, so what I took with me had to pass the double test: "Can I depend on it not to let me down?" and "Am I positive I can't do without it?"

I must take the tent, for there was likely to be some wet weather during the early stages of the trek, and perhaps in Ovamboland. I must take some camp kit for the preparation and serving of my food, and a stove for use in areas where there was no firewood. I must carry camera, films and those medical stores that past experience had told me were necessities, both for myself and the sick who are always paraded before a white man at every native village that he visits. Even at the back of beyond it is necessary to have a change of clothes, and it is only justice to the feet, that are the mainstay of any expedition, to provide them with a change of boots.

As I can scarcely read my own handwriting at the best of times, I must take my typewriter. Add to that lot a gun and ammunition, together with other miscellaneous essentials ; then take a look at the bicycle and remember that it will be

necessary to eat on the journey. Where is food, bought or "collected," going to be packed? And what about water? A gallon of water weighs ten pounds and takes up no small space, and on a trek through dry country water must be carried in sufficient quantities for several days.

A man requires from two to three pints of water daily to keep in good health. It is possible to train oneself to manage on less, but it is not advisable to make a habit of doing so, although those men who answer the lure of the desert areas of the earth have to for considerable periods.

At this stage I began to consider trying to exchange Sir Walter for a couple of camels and a wheelbarrow. But, eventually, I reduced to a fully loaded front carrier (with hurricane lamp, frying-pan, and two water-bags tied on as trimmings), tent, poles and gun fastened along the bar, typewriter and kitbag on the stern carrier (kettle and two more water-bags forming the trimmings there).

"Anything else I can carry in a haversack, while I'll also wear a water-bottle and camera," I decided; and then found that I still had the spare tyres to tie on somewhere.

Finally, I took the whole bag of tricks out on to the road, attended by the anxious Ambrose, and found that there was so much weight over the front wheel that I could not steer. After falling off in front of a tram, to the consternation of those inhabitants of Capetown, white, black, and coloured, there assembled, I went back and began sorting kit all over again until Heap Two began to assume such alarming proportions that I began to fear I should have to rent a warehouse in Capetown for its storage while I was away.

My route to the boundary of South-West Africa I had mapped out before leaving England. Northwards all the way, through the Cape granary, through Malmesbury, Piquetberg, to Bitterfontein and Ookiep, then across Little Bushmanland to Raman's Drift across the Orange River into South-West Africa. That seemed simple enough when I worked it out on a map. It was to be a breaking-in run, preparing me for the real rigours ahead. I saw visions of myself swooping with the grace of a sea-gull down the long hills, following the white road to distant townships, exploring Kafir trails and game paths, covering three times as much ground in a day as would be possible on foot—but the pessimists I met, and they were many, assured me that roads in the Western Cape were among the worst in the Union of South Africa; they spoke of sand, told me that I would never get through from Ookiep to the Orange River, or from the Orange River to Warmbad in South-West Africa; finally they said that I would not be allowed through, anyway, for no one but a lunatic or an illicit diamond buyer would take a bicycle that way, and the authorities, not knowing me as well as my friends, would decide I was the latter.

“Anybody who travels in that direction comes under suspicion,” I was warned; “for there are sufficient diamonds locked up in Namaqualand to supply the entire population of the world with a handful apiece. A merchant travelling that way on business is viewed with suspicion; you on a bicycle, pottering along like a halfwit—well, you're liable to be stopped and have your machine and yourself taken to bits at frequent intervals. They'll X-ray you to discover if you've swallowed

any diamonds, and if the picture shows any foreign substances in your stomach, they'll give you a dose of castor oil and keep you under observation—I should know ; I tried to put a smart one over ! ”

All the pessimists seemed to have tried to “ put smart ones over ” on the authorities, and the hints and tips I was given on diamond smuggling would fill a book. The “ agent provocateur ” methods of the authorities struck me as being blatant in the extreme. My preliminary run began to change its complexion, my anxieties to increase.

Between whiles, I renewed old friendships in and around Capetown. By this I do not mean that I moved in a whirl of—“ Here we are again ! ” “ Fancy seeing you ! ” “ Didn't know you were back ! ” “ Bill, look who's here ! ” Enduring friends do not walk on two legs.

Table Mountain is an old friend, a welcome singpost, indicating Africa. Before the Suez and Panama canals were constructed it was the principal signpost on the world's greatest highway. I did not climb to the top this time, for I could not spare the necessary hours ; nor did I trust myself to the cableway (I have never been able to summon up enough courage to trust myself to that twenty-minute ascent over four thousand feet long cables to the restaurant at the top.) I like one of the reasonably easy climbs, preferably that by Platteklip Gorge, affording some of the wildest and grandest scenery in the world. But each morning I was welcomed by the sight of those old friends—Table Mountain, with the attendant heights of the Devil's Peak (known to the early navigators as The Mountain of the Winds), The Lion's Head and the Lion's Rump. For most of

my stay in Capetown a thick tablecloth of cloud clung low over the mountains, adding to the beauty of the picture, for it softened the jagged outline of the vast wall of rock.

I visited the Castle, almost every stone, brick and tile in which was imported from Holland, a strange old building, saturated in history, but now of no importance. It never pretended to be impregnable, even in the days of primitive artillery when it was built. There is a delightful story in the archives of an artilleryman of those days, who ventured to express the opinion that the Castle was commanded by higher ground to the south-east. He was immediately arrested and imprisoned on a charge of sedition and privy conspiracy. A gun was then taken on to the hills he had indicated as potential dangers and a shot was fired. The ball fell short of the Castle, so the unfortunate was released, but the cost of the experiment was charged to him.

The records of the Castle are worthy of study, for they are full of quaint incident. The work of construction proceeded so slowly that Governor Bax, in 1677, issued the fiat that every burgher who passed the castle must carry out twelve baskets full of earth from the excavations, the ladies each to carry six. The Governor inaugurated this by duly carrying twelve, while his good wife accompanied him with six. I wonder how many of the work-shy trod new paths in the surrounding wilds, as they made detours to avoid the Castle in the months which followed.

" June 6, 1652—First child born in the Fort of Good Hope."

" October 2—Herman Van Vogelaar, Volunteer, sentenced to one hundred blows from the butt of

his musket, for wishing the purser at the devil for serving out penguins instead of beef and pork."

"January 23, 1653—This night it appeared as if lions would take the fort by storm."

"January 8, 1655—The chaplain's wife gives birth to a second son. All the other ladies are also soon likely to follow her example."

These tit-bits, and many like them, are to be found in the records of those early days of the Dutch occupation of the Cape, and when the great Jan Van Riebeeck, first Governor of the Cape, departed with his family for Batavia in 1659, we find recorded that his successor, Van Wagenaar, apparently made of more æsthetic material, "prays the Council of Seventeen to send, by next ships, a little coarse window-glass and lead, to glaze the windows of the fort, now only covered with some coarse cotton, and a few common paintings, to cover the ugly, bare walls of our front hall. . . ."

Next year he asks for two bells "to enliven the farmers in this lonely place." The date on the oldest bell in Capetown, which still rings the hours, is 1697. This must have been long after poor Van Wagenaar had ceased to pray the great Council of Seventeen.

It is strange, after browsing in the antiquities of that pioneer page in Capetown's history, to step out into the busy modern streets, to the trams, the trolley-buses, the innumerable cars, the pedal-cycles, all moving along wide, modern roads, with well-dressed crowds and evidences of general culture. Capetown is the stateliest city in South Africa, compared by many to Naples. It has beauty and charm, spaciousness, a glorious climate, and superb surroundings ; it also has District Six,

as wicked, vile a slum area as any to be found in cities which have given several hundred more years to the accumulation of slums.

In District Six and its environs, the police patrol in pairs, and take their lives in their hands. I know one young constable who observed two "coloured" men slinking behind a hoarding. Unwisely he followed. He revived many hours later, stark naked, and with a razor slash from eye to chin. He was lucky. Inquisitive folk, unsupported by force of numbers, do not generally revive at all after such an encounter.

In District Six are herded together in an incredible state of overcrowding, the dregs of Africa, people of mixed races and sins, horrible, indescribable mixtures of both. The razor is the favourite weapon down that way, although a broken bottle-neck, or a sandbag do their stuff upon occasion. There are depraved, bestial exhibitions promoted down there which Port Said and Marseilles combined could not make more perverted. And the menace of District Six is spreading. The "scollie-boys," with their razors and their vices, now go out to hunt their victims, hovering around not only the docks but the genteel areas of the town. A visit to District Six is an education, a graduation class in universal vice.

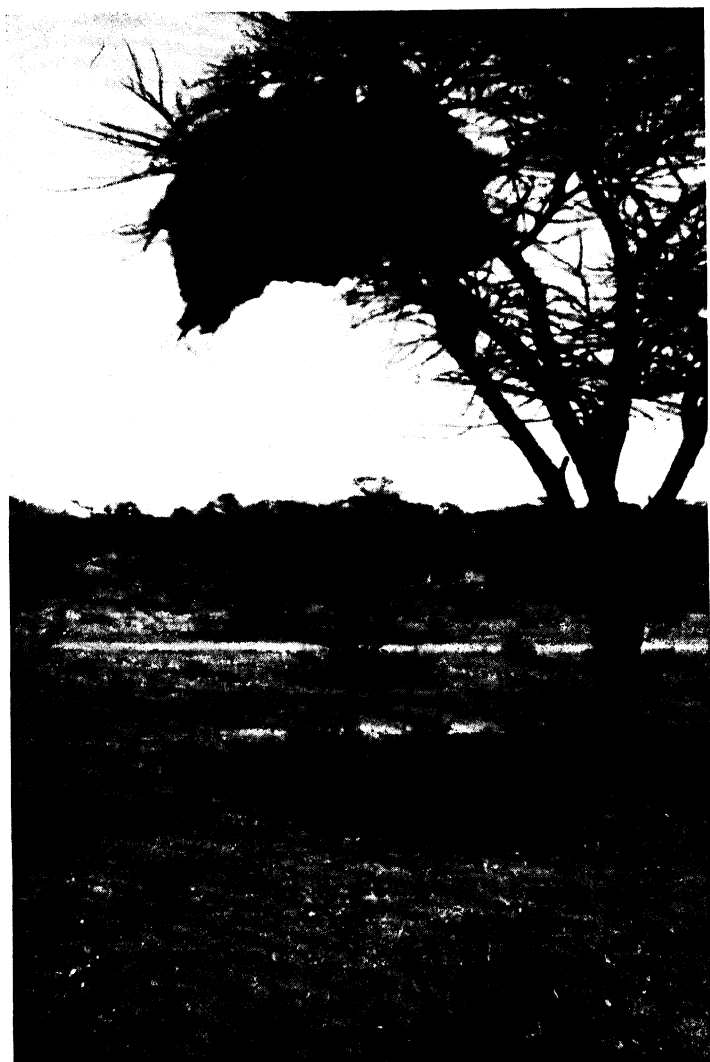
The slums of Capetown are not confined to District Six. Out on the Cape Flats, in among the sand-dunes, are scattered hundreds of pondokkies, crowded with coloured people of uncertain occupation. These "dwellings" are little huts, made from iron sheets, flattened out paraffin tins, strips of paper and matting, strips sawn off the outside of tree-trunks.

Here whole families are crowded together in tiny rooms, mixed up with dogs, cats and other livestock. Windows are the exception; marsh water serves as the water supply, and is shared with tadpoles and other water-creatures. Any form of sanitation is unknown.

When I surveyed these ghastly hovels, my thoughts went to the average kraal of the real unspoilt African. I thought of the cluster of neat, beehive-shaped huts, set around a space of clean, hard-beaten earth; of the happy, contented, jolly folk who live there, the fat children crawling around in the dust, unrestricted as little animals, the women chattering at their work, half-naked and unashamed, and the old men sitting in a shady spot, exchanging large pinches of snuff and telling old tales.

That is uncivilized Africa; the pondokkies on the Cape Flats are the creation of civilization, and the half-bred people gathered there scorn the Kafirs as being beneath them. Each of those hovels contains a bedstead and a dresser with some chipped crockery. The folk there are civilized; they do not sleep on a clean mat on the hard earth, nor do they eat with fingers and a wooden spoon, nor drink from gourds and clay pots. They have *risen* above such low behaviour. Civilization has found them.

A most noticeable feature of Pondokkie-land is the old women wearing the white square on their heads which denotes the midwife, for like clock-work in those hovels, without even the natural advantages that aid a wild Kafir woman at such a time, new human lives flock into the slum areas. My last impression as I turned away was of children crying on all sides.



A BIRD'S NEST

I had hired a car that afternoon, and I drove on from the pondokkies to complete the circuit of the finest marine drive in the world, one hundred miles of combined mountain scenery and seascape, superbly bold and varied. Engineers have hewn the road out of the precipitious flanks of the mountains, with far below the sea breaking on the rocky base. Every mile has its breath-taking view of immense overhanging crests, the great mass of Table Mountain and the giant buttresses of the Twelve Apostles, with on the other side, a series of beautiful rock-girt bays.

I visited Groote Schuur, originally a farm owned by Jan Van Riebeeck, that first governor, but which became, three centuries later, the home of Cecil Rhodes ; and from there I naturally climbed to the Rhodes Memorial. No visit to Capetown would be complete without that, and I know of one hard-headed English business man who treasures a slip of bougainvillea cut from the bushes by the Memorial and slipped self-consciously into his pocket when he thought no one was watching.

The Memorial is built in the form of a classic temple in grey granite, approached by wide terraces of steps, flanked by massive bronze lions, and there among the tall grey columns is a characteristic bust of Cecil Rhodes, the dreamer and doer, with his gaze fixed, as always, on the far north.

The inscription is simple : " To the Spirit and Lifework of Cecil John Rhodes, who loved and served South Africa."

Rhodes loved this spot, for when he sought seclusion with his dreams, he could see from here the Cape Peninsula spread below him like a map,

with the Indian Ocean on the one side, and the Atlantic on the other. As I looked out across that colossal panorama, I found myself considering the theory that environment makes the man. Would Rhodes have been anything more than a nonentity if doomed to gaze on nothing more than the country around Bishop's Stortford, or a London street? What would the map of Africa be to-day if that sickly lad, his whim to go abroad set down to an attack of calf-love, had followed his father's wishes and entered the Church?

States should arrange for politicians, and all those responsible for the welfare of the people, to be taken periodically and placed upon mountain-tops, there to sit and think. What man can think small when all around him is on a vast scale, his horizons sundered by hundreds of miles?

Mountains always have one effect on me. From the top of one I see others in the distance, and I cannot rest content until I have climbed those to see what lies behind. The hidden places always lure. What does it matter if every range conquered on my trek north only looks down on lonely stretches of sun-dappled grass, bush, or desert, with perhaps here and there an isolated farm, or a gawky town, all outflung streets like a youngster's arms and legs, and suffering badly from growing pains—there will always be another range ahead, masking the promise of Something Different.

Everything is packed now, and I am writing up my notes in Capetown for the last time before departure. Sir Walter is leaning against the wall of the chicken-house, a horrible example of how completely a bicycle can be overloaded.

To-morrow the trek begins.

CHAPTER II

NORTH TO THE ORANGE RIVER—WITH DEVIATIONS

I

At an early stage of the trek to the north I cried bitterly that Africa is all uphill! For every slope that I coasted down after leaving Capetown I seemed to have to climb two twice as long, and Sir Walter was distressingly heavy and unwieldy. The steering remained a continual strain on the wrists, owing to the excessive weight over the front wheel, and whenever a hill, or some obstruction, slowed me down, I generally fell over, with the bicycle on top of me. Mounting again was a procedure which drew crowds in the settled areas, for, in the first place, I had to swing my leg in a high-kicking effort equal to the best produced by any chorus girl (otherwise I caught my foot in the kettle and fell over again), followed by a duck-like paddling action to get up speed before venturing to lift my stern into the saddle and begin pedalling. The haversack for last-moment items then generally swung forward to intrude between my knee and the bar, bringing me down again, or something off the back carrier slid forward to present a hard, sharp surface for me to sit on.

Eventually, however, all would go well and I would wobble on my way, head well down, legs

working overtime, tins and storm-lantern clattering ; and the crowd—whether composed of Europeans, natives, or mixed breeds—usually was kind enough to give me a parting cheer. I had enlivened their day for them. The most stupid appreciated that there was a bigger fool in the world.

The only member of a crowd against whom I harbour any hard feelings is an elderly woman who dashed up to me with a large parcel (it looked like the family washing) and asked me to deliver it at an address in the next town, as she had just missed the carrier ! If she reads this I refuse to apologise for what I think about her. She must have heard of the proverbial straw which broke the camel's back, and her parcel was no straw.

When I made my first camp, about twenty miles out of Capetown, it was with the knowledge that I must further reduce the load if I wished to improve on a speed of two miles and twenty-five falls per hour. And as I bent the handle-bars back into shape and examined the bruises and abrasions between my ankles and the top of my head, I began to harbour serious doubts about the value of the bicycle as a form of transport in Africa. Those doubts grew as days went by.

The run from Capetown had been quite pleasant, along the edge of the sea, curving round the bay, through Woodstock to the suburb of Milnerton. History kept pace with me, for it was at Woodstock, then called Papendorp, that in 1806 the Dutch signed the treaty by which the Cape finally passed into the hands of the British. And three hundred years before that it played its part in altering the whole history of Southern Africa.

The great rovers and colonizers of those times,

the Portuguese, landed on the beach at Woodstock, and there is no doubt that they would have established themselves permanently in the Cape if their welcome had been in any way pleasant. But the heavy sand impeded them, and the natives cunningly drove a herd of cattle against them, creating such confusion that half the Portuguese force perished, including their leader, the great Dom Francisco d'Almeida, Governor-General of Portuguese India. This inhospitable reception caused Portuguese adventurers to give the Cape a wide berth, with the result now to be seen on the map.

Near Milnerton the victorious British force landed in 1806, but the chief objects of interest there to-day are both essentially modern, symbols of the science which girdles the globe and penetrates the darkest corners, the Beam wireless station and the transmitter of the Cape Broadcasting Station.

But I wanted to forget such emblems of the life I had left behind in England, so I ignored the inviting advertisement for lager beer outside a cosy-looking hotel, and rode on until I reached a stretch of bushland, which might have been a thousand miles from towns.

It was a relief to get myself and the gear off the bicycle, and I soon had the tent up and a fire going. First camps are always the most difficult. Essentials have a trick of hiding themselves, no matter how experienced the packer, and the routine which later becomes second nature almost invariably springs from a chaotic beginning. But for all the petty inconveniences and the turmoil of getting straight for the night, it was grand to be clear of four walls and a roof above.

I supped with the sky for a roof and the distant horizon for walls, and I knew that many such suppers stretched ahead of me, although the fare was not likely to keep to the same high standard. Dried meat and a teaspoonful of brackish water were likely to form the menu later, but that first camp-fire meal will always be a pleasant memory.

I dined and wined with gusto. I had intended to feed entirely from tins while in the more settled parts of the Cape, but some incautious doves showed up while I was making camp. The dove is an emblem of peace ; several of him, judiciously cooked, make a tasty snack as a prelude to fruit, bread and cheese, washed down with a mug of the white wine for which the Cape should be more famous than it is.

But those doves almost brought my journey north to a premature finish in the not so distant graveyard. The Pessimists in Capetown had assured me that " scollie-boys "—toughs from the slums—roam far afield these days, and are to be found in and around all the suburbs.

" They skulk around in any patch of bush. Folk get robbed, left naked. . . . There was a man once . . . robbed even of his false teeth. . . ."

I did not pay much heed to those tales, but the scaremongers were for once not relying on their imaginations. The shots which added the doves to my larder must have attracted the attention of a collection of these skulking, coloured rats. Five of them paid me a visit.

If you can picture a coffee-skinned male, with debased, stupid, wicked face, dressed in an astounding mixture of tattered European garments generally completed by a curved calabash pipe between yellow, decayed teeth, and with a razor,

or some other offensive weapon ready for instant use, you will have some idea of the general appearance of the unwelcome visitors. They slunk up to the fire and surveyed me and my belongings ; they told me that they were starving, and a wrinkled, hideous little man, who might have been any age up to a hundred—a wizened ape, with obvious Bushman blood in him, toothless, almost chinless, nose a shapeless blob, eyes sunk deep beneath protruding brows and wreathed in deep furrows in the tan skin—bared his stomach to substantiate the statement. In a mixture of Dutch and English blasphemy I was informed of their unfortunate lot. Nobody wanted them, but they wanted food. Man must live, even if he is an outcast, a by-product of civilization.

I fed them and gave them tobacco, so I was not lonely by that first camp-fire. Such surroundings breed intimacies ; men usually open up around a camp-fire and talk. Chance companions of a night learn more of closed chapters in another man's life than city friends of long standing. A man in Portuguese East Africa once told me how he murdered his wife. I put that confidence down to the bottle of brandy we were sharing by the fire, but weeks later I learnt that he had given himself up to the police. I am glad they did not hang him, because I know why he did it.

Those " scollie-boys " talked. Theirs were not confessions. They boasted and bragged, and scarcely a word of the conversation would be printable in the most broadminded of publications. I was glad when they left me, although I suspected that it was a case of "*au revoir* but not good-bye." They were not nice to know. I suppose I should have reported my encounter to the nearest police

station. I doubt it. The police would shrug their collective shoulders and remind me that there are hotels in Milnerton. Even if they caught and imprisoned that quintet on some charge ; if they cleaned out the surroundings of Capetown, imprisoning all " scollie-boys " and other out-castes, the action would be on a par with trying to purify a poisoned well by skimming some of the scum off the surface.

I did not get much sleep that night. Not only did it turn cold, and my drastic reduction of kit had included the jettisoning of all but one blanket, but I had to keep the fire and a lamp burning, while at least one eye and ear must remain open, so that I could welcome the quintet as they deserved on their return.

They did not come back, but my wakefulness was rewarded. Just as dawn began to turn the light grey, I smelt burning, heard a faint crackling, and realized that the atmosphere was becoming thick with smoke. Whether my former companions set fire to the bush as a token of gratitude, or the fire was an unfortunate coincidence, I cannot say. I suspected at the time that they hoped to drive me out in a panic, so that they could descend on the tent and help themselves.

Perhaps I wronged them, for I saw no sign of them as I hastily dragged the tent down, flung my kit haphazard on to the bicycle, and pushed it at a fast trot through the burning bush to the road. There was dry grass mixed with that bush, and it blazed like an inferno, so I was blackened, shaken and annoyed, when I eventually began to repack in the road.

It was then that I finally decided that I was carrying too much. Should another emergency

occur, I must be in the position to break camp, mount and ride away, in half the time that it took me. Also I found that morning's ride even more wearying and back-breaking than that of the day before, and I fell off as often. So I consulted the map and decided to head for the railway at Kalabas Kraal. There I would be able to discard still more "essentials" and send them back to Capetown.

So I went on my way, plodding along through a morning which gradually worked up to a fine heat. The bicycle was so heavy that I had to dismount and push up the slightest incline, while when I did free-wheel down hill, a rut in the road, a patch of sand, or even an unexpected loose stone, would send me crashing down.

The surrounding country rapidly changed, for I was entering the granary of the Cape. Farms were spaced at great intervals, and the dusty, winding road, climbing all the time, passed through few hamlets, but on all sides, stretching for miles to the distant hills was a yellow expanse of wheat. And whenever I looked back, I could see the abrupt, distinctive mass of Table Mountain, with the cloud hanging low over it. It looked like a fantastic illustration out of some old-fashioned fairy-tale, for it did not seem to belong to the surrounding landscape, and I was reminded of the fable about that shroud of clouds.

The story goes that long ago the Devil and a Dutchman met on top of Table Mountain. They had a difference of opinion on the subject of smoking. Each claimed to be the bigger smoker. So they took out their pipes and began a contest.

Apparently that contest has never been settled, for whenever the clouds shroud the mountain,

folk who know the fable, say : " The Dutchman and the Devil are hard at it to-day ! "

II

Beyond Kalabas Kraal I made better speed, for I reduced my load considerably. I left myself without a blanket, a jersey and a mackintosh must suffice at night ; I discarded frying-pan and some other cooking gear, tin plates weigh less and serve more than one purpose ; spare boots went ; also the suit that I was to wear on any formal occasion that might arise. When I surveyed the bundle on the platform at the little station of Kalabas Kraal I did not seem to have discarded much, but the weight of the bicycle was astoundingly different when I mounted again.

Kalabas Kraal seemed to consist solely of railway station, hotel, garage and dogs. There were many dogs. Sir Walter and I ran into and fell over more than I can remember, while the rest barked at us and pretended to bite me. Kraal is the word most generally applied to a native village. I do not know who the original Kalabas was, but I am sure he had something to do with dog breeding. All those dogs were not ownerless strays. Somebody loved at least one ; judging by what he said, he did not love me.

From Kalabas Kraal I plugged on along the winding, ever-climbing road, which rapidly deteriorated. The sand grew steadily thicker, ruts deepened and became more widespread and frequent, sinking at times into vast pits. With a lightened machine I was able to travel fast when-

ever the slope was with me, and it was an exhilarating, though nerve-racking task to steer between the ruts, the pot-holes and the loose boulders. Occasional cars passed me, leaving clouds of choking dust as legacies, the motorists looking back in amazement at an apparition which was apparently new to the roads of the Western Cape, where cycle hiking has not as yet become a popular recreation (I know why !). Some waved to me, even shouted encouragements, but nobody going my way slowed down, or showed any sign of stopping to offer a lift.

Lorries were usually driven by natives or "coloured" men, with friends and relations perched wherever possible. They shrieked at me, some almost falling off in their excitement ; but like the cars of the white folk, they swept on out of sight, leaving me their dust to chew over.

Surprised folk, at this and all stages of the journey, appeared at the roadside from huts hidden somewhere out of sight. They goggled as my incredible machine went by. Some called pleasantries ; others I believe intended to be insulting. Babies dashed out from the shelter of their mothers' skirts—for all people in this area were shrouded from ankle to neck in never-very-clean, always much-patched European garb—and escaped death by inches under the wheels of Sir Walter. If I fell off through swerving too violently to avoid these would-be suicides, the baby would become ecstatic over this entertainment, which it obviously believed was provided entirely for its amusement.

Occasional fowls, true to the old riddle, crossed the road at the wrong moment, and I will admit that more than one definite casualty found its

way into the haversack, *en route* for the pot later.

I camped in a variety of places—a desolate stretch of sand, where some peculiar new insect which I never identified, raised blobs on me the size of plums ; a charming dell by a river, with the soft murmur of the stream for a lullaby, the lower branches of the slender trees festooned with the ingenious, cosy nests of weaver birds ; and among the ruins of a burnt-out farmhouse.

In all these places, in glad seclusion, I prepared my lonely meal, and then smoked the best pipe of the day by the leaping flames of the fire. And what better companion could a man ask than that? Since first he learnt to kindle flame by rubbing two sticks together, fire has always been the friend of the savage ; but, as with all friendships, familiarity leads to trouble. Burnt-out villages and blackened, incinerated lands bear witness to that.

Those hours of paradoxical solitary companionship and bone-weary restfulness by a camp-fire are unforgettable memories. A man's mind strays strangely in such surroundings. He thinks great thoughts, lazily builds magnificent plans, and, after rolling into the tent to sleep like a log, finds on waking that he has forgotten all of them ; that he is only a man after all, a bitterly cold one, with a hard day ahead—not the god he felt the night before.

I spent one night in a queer little country hotel. A sign advertising somebody's beer grew suddenly out of the gloom as though by magic, when I was seeking a camping-ground. There were a few buildings around, and I discovered next morning that I was at the tail-end of a small town. But silence and darkness were all round me when I

dismounted from Sir Walter and propped him against the verandah rail. Turning the corner I found one lighted window, so I hunted for the door and rapped.

A blind was drawn aside and a woman's face appeared for an instant. The show then seemed over for the night, as nothing else happened. But the temptation to sleep in a bed, to eat supper at a table, perhaps even to shave my chin in the morning, and, above all, to sink my nose into a big glass of that advertised beer, had taken hold on me. I rapped again, harder, authoritatively. I repeated to myself what a lawyer cousin had once told me of the Innkeepers' Act of 1863, further amended by that of 1878, and assured myself that if it did not apply in South Africa, something drastic should be done about it.

Finally, the door opened.

"What do you want?" demanded a voice in Afrikaans.

Now Afrikaans is an official language in South Africa. Everyone should speak it. To secure any form of Government employment a man must be bilingual. Unfortunately, I made a bad start years ago, and that seems to have put me off. When farming in the Transvaal I asked a friend to tell me an Afrikaans phrase, so that I could pass the time of day with my Dutch neighbour. I learnt the words parrot-fashion and proudly repeated them to Van de Merwe. The effort of goodwill was not a success, for it seems that what I said was: "Good morning, Mijnheer; how is your wife and *my* children?" I learnt then that pronouns are important, and that a burly Dutchman packs a wicked punch.

With that memory in mind I did not venture

much in reply to the query at the hotel. I explained my wants in English, but the Cape Province north of Capetown is the stronghold of the Nationalists. At times feeling against the British is fanatically strong. Many of those people have never forgotten the Boer war, and never will, because they do not intend to. Anything British stinks in their nostrils. They can think of nothing to put in its place, except that will-o'-the-wisp called independence. They refuse to face up to the fact that if Great Britain steps out, some other World Power will step in, for South Africa is not yet in a position to stand on her own feet and be economically independent. Ninety-nine men out of a hundred in the Union of South Africa appreciate this, but the hundredth probably comes from the Western Cape or some back-veld corner of the Transvaal.

During the "running-in" period of my trek, the pleasure trip before the real hazards to come, I passed through the stronghold of this variety of die-hard. They could speak English, but many of them refused to do so. They were never really inhospitable, for the tradition of colonial hospitality was too strong, and fundamentally their natures were too kind and pleasant, but I was never as welcome as I would have been had I spoken faultless Afrikaans and held different views on the subject of Imperialism.

I did my best. I trotted out all the Afrikaans I could muster, and floundered along with ungrammatical determination, taking care never to broach controversial topics, for there is something admirable and dour about these descendants of pioneers, and we had in common a love of Africa amounting almost to a mania.

The proprietor of that hotel was one of the most rabid Nationalists that I met, but he put a room at my disposal. He produced not one, but *two* visitors' books, and I had to sign both. I prepared myself for the worst when I saw that the last entry before mine was made seven months before my arrival, while on the wall of my bedroom there was a tear-off calendar of the variety which has a poetical quotation for each day of the year. Somebody had attended religiously to this, tearing off the sheets up to the 27th of June, 1933. I had to look in my diary to convince myself that a calendar could remain untouched on the wall for more than three years !

There was, naturally, no bathroom, and while I was daring the traveller's substitute—that nerve-racking business of balancing in a small china basin and pouring water over one's precariously soaped anatomy—a woman's voice asked through the providentially locked door (for she did not knock) what I would like for supper.

What a question to ask of a man who has been on a lone trek, dependent on his own culinary skill, a tin-opener and tins ! It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that visions floated before my eyes ; but by a process of elimination I found that the choice was limited to eggs.

"Scrambled eggs on toast—many of them," ordered I ; but she declined to understand that. So I had to wrap a towel round me and take up my dictionary. It was a ridiculous position for an explorer to be in, standing in an hotel bedroom, attired in a bath-towel, shouting "*eiers*" through the keyhole (naturally pronouncing it wrong), and trying to find a word for "scrambled" in a damp dictionary. I finally ventured "*gemaalde*"

because I found that "*gemaalde vleis*" meant "minced meat," and that was the nearest I could get. But it must have been wrong, or else the woman did not know her own language, for I reached the dining-room to find two soft-boiled eggs waiting for me.

With a flourish the good lady placed a coffee-pot before me and said: "Tea!" I am positive it wasn't; but it also wasn't coffee.

The Afrikanders are great coffee-drinkers, and I offer here a golden rule for travellers off the beaten track anywhere in South Africa. Never drink coffee at a back-veld farm towards the end of the week, for I have come to the decision that they only brew once a week, and by Saturday—well, isolated stores do not always stock dyspepsia tablets. But on Monday—I have many pleasant memories of Mondays, lazy hours on broad stoeps, pipes filling the air with the tang of Magaliesberg tobacco, coffee-cup regularly replenished, broad acres stretching away outside, gruff voices talking of crops and rain and locusts and Kafirs; softer feminine voices cunningly extracting tit-bits of gossip, little, trumpery scandals from the world beyond the farm.

The man on trek, foot-loose in a wide country, naturally becomes a purveyor of gossip, for he is vouchsafed fleeting glimpses into lonely, scattered homes. An hour, or a day, at a farm, and he has probably had confided to him many of the most intimate troubles of the inhabitants, and those of most of their neighbours. Then he moves on, to trek for days without seeing anyone; then another verandah, and the old round of conversation:

"The So-and-so's? Yes, I did hear about them. . . ."

" Did you ever, now ! "

" Sis, man, you don't say so ! "

But it is not what the traveller retails that is of importance. Much remains in his mind, locked away, never to be spoken, and he goes on his way, marvelling at the courage of lonely people.

III

Isolated farmhouse, labourer's hut, the tent of a road-ganger or of a railwayman, Sir Walter and I took them in our stride as we continued northwards. Memories of those early stages of the trek crowd in. There was the child who, hearing at school of a bigger world beyond the boundaries of his father's farm, set out to find it. I am glad I found him first, for his parents were frantic. I could sympathize with him. My parents remember how a small friend and I ran off to find that same wonderful Something beyond our own little world. I have not found it yet. A callous friend summed the matter up for me once.

" You know what you'll find in the end ? A wooden box and an oblong hole in the ground—if you're lucky ! "

There was the bagman who had travelled this corner of the Cape for more than forty years. Originally he took his wares around in a mule-cart, dependent for food, shelter and forage upon the hospitality of the even more scattered population of those days. He has watched the country change. He hates the changes. For him national and international questions are nothing but a nuisance.

"We're all just ordinary folk. They need what I sell, and I bring it to them," he declared. "In those days, when I set off on a trip I never knew how long it would take—weeks, months! Now I have a car. I can be sure of spending my week-ends in Capetown. I depend on no hospitality, for I can get from hotel to hotel in a day, where I pay for what I get in hard cash, and get just what I pay for—but I am one who would not mind putting the clock back."

There were the towns, the fast-growing dorps of the Western Cape. Malmesbury, originally built around hot mineral springs in 1745 and named Het Zwarte Land, but renamed after the first Earl of Malmesbury, the man who married Princess Caroline by proxy for George IV (then Prince of Wales) and conducted her to England to her royal lord, thereby creating a smudge on the royal escutcheon. For George disliked her so intensely that, after she had borne him a daughter, he separated from her and tried to push a Divorce Bill through the Lords to get rid of her. The town named after Lord Malmesbury in distant Africa, however, has thrived. It now has a municipal valuation of over half a million pounds sterling, Dutch, English and Roman churches, and a Jewish synagogue, while the hot mineral springs are still praised by sufferers from rheumatism.

Personally, I found it a pleasant little town, but object to its situation. To go north from Malmesbury, it is necessary to climb an interminable road, up, up, up into the skies, and I called Sir Walter unpardonable names in the process.

Moorreesburg is another pretty, growing dorp

in the grain district, beyond which the road becomes increasingly rough, the surroundings more picturesque and less cultivated, as preparations are made for the stupendous climb of 7000 feet to the top of the Berg beyond Piquetberg. All these towns played their part in history, but Piquetberg, a gawky, spreading place, short of water, overshadowed by the Berg, stands out as the home for a long while of the astounding Adam Kok, first Captain of those strange half-castes who founded the Griqua nation.

The story of the colonization of East and West Griqualand has little concern with the objects of my trek, although the Rehoboth Bastards of South-West Africa are only a branch of the same peculiar people, but from Piquetberg north I came into contact with strays from the original clans, so it is excusable to dig back into their history.

These strange half-castes, the extensive progeny of mixed matings of white sailors who visited the huts of native slaves in Capetown, and of pioneer farmers who looked upon a slave as a chattel for him to possess in whatsoever sense he liked to read into the word, banded themselves together under the leadership of captains away back in history (in the middle of the eighteenth century), and trekked north.

Their life was hard, for many of them were hunted as runaways. Reduced to nakedness, they hunted in their turn, preying upon the vast herds of game which they found in the wilderness.

The Kok family provided most of the Captains, and prominent among these was Old Adam Kok, a remarkably intelligent specimen of his unfortunate kind, who earned his freedom. The Government of that day gave him permission to

settle at Piquetberg, where he developed into a strange mixture—a great hunter and a keeper of flocks, for he gradually amassed a wealth of small stock. Although there was Hottentot blood in him—perhaps even Bushman-negro—which could be traced back to show an Oriental strain, this cocktail of a man seemed to have the best qualities of the mixed blood in him predominate. He showed wisdom, patience and breadth of vision, those qualities which the majority of his kind so often lack.

He lived to be ninety, and in that time pressure was exerted by white farmers moving northwards, so that the half-castes were forced to trek on, until they lined the Orange River. They went the way that I was heading, until at the end of the eighteenth century, 5000 Bastards (as the majority of them have unhesitatingly named themselves) were ranged along the length of the river.

Unfortunately Adam Kok was the exception. The majority were improvident and shiftless, ready to sell anything they had, or to steal anything they had not, to exchange for drink. Even to-day it is said that anyone of them who still owns land would part with it for a bottle of brandy if the Government had not made a law forbidding the transfer of their land to people outside their community.

The Voortrekkers soon came up against them. There was battle and bloodshed ; and the coloured folk trekked on. In 1861, 2000 of them, with 300 vehicles and 20,000 head of cattle, set out across the unmapped country to the east. They settled around Kokstad, near the Cape-Natal border, elected a People's Council of Twelve, with

Charles Brisley, a young Englishman, as secretary, and declared themselves a nation, drawing up elaborate laws, by which they still live.

Others went north, to where I eventually found them—proud owners of some of the richest land in South-West Africa ; lazy and improvident still ; shepherds and hunters—" the people who never smile "—with a rickety Parliament House of their own, where they sit and smoke, and talk of their rights under the League of Nations.

But I must keep back what I found in and around Rehoboth until its proper place in this narrative. The Bastards belong to the unforgettable trek ahead, beyond the Berg and the Orange River.

IV

The Pass beyond Piquetberg is a nightmare that will always remain with me. So sheer is the climb that in places the road has to form a figure 8, as the only way of surmounting it. Back one goes on one's tracks, round the loop, back again, climbing all the time, with a stupendous panorama spread out below.

I shall not attempt to describe it ; I scarcely saw it, certainly did not appreciate its beauties ; for I had to push Sir Walter up that incredible road. It will suffice to say that we reached the summit of the pass and journeyed on into the pleasant land beyond.

I climbed from the spreading grain lands around Piquetberg into the majestic solitude of the mountains, into an atmosphere cool and misty and remote, on top of the world. On the summit

there is one of the most astounding farms in existence, a farm on a mountain-top, which reaps rich crops and is a model of scientific management and efficiency.

The sight during this part of the journey of orderly rows of citrus trees filled me with a strange nostalgia, for I once attempted to make a fortune out of growing oranges. Those orange-growing days were a happy, irresponsible slice out of my life, when, with a very new young wife, much hope, the irrepressible high-spirits of youth, and little capital, I planted acre upon acre of trees in unsuitable soil in a pioneer corner of Africa, made cherished friends, and began to learn my Africa.

A number of us were lured to Africa to grow oranges for a living shortly after the war. At first we talked gaily of making our fortunes, and read books on citrus culture written by Californians for California, while we organized our own amusements, learnt to cope with isolation, strange surroundings and people, and lived hard. Later we no longer mentioned the word money, as we took further helpings of our staple diet—mealie-meal porridge and venison. We thought at first that we were farmers, but after a while we were never certain if we were devotees of some new religious sect, sticking stunted trees in entirely unsuitable soil and then sitting back on our collective haunches and praying for the rain that never came at the right time, or just plain and ordinary damned fools. Finally, we realized that we were the latter.

So we pulled up our stakes and moved elsewhere, trading, transport-riding, trying other farming ventures in the most undependable climate in the

world ; some even returned to desks in the city. But none are ever likely to forget those citrus-growing days, and I drank a solemn, solitary toast to those who shared them with me, as I looked down upon the orange trees in the Western Cape.

I descended again from the mountains. Passed on my way through Clanwilliam, with the magnificent Government cedar plantations nearby, Klaver, Van Rhynsdorp—more pages from a book of varied experience—through fertile land, much of it irrigated from the Olifants River, to land which rapidly grew more arid as I approached the scantily populated, almost waterless copper districts of Namaqualand. Close ahead of me, along the Orange River, lay the little-known, arid slice of Africa, almost destitute of vegetation, practically unexplored, which only one man has really tried to describe to the world.

F. C. Cornell wandered through that peculiar, grotesque land, a lonely man, frequently deserted by his boys, and so accompanied often only by a couple of pack-donkeys. He found diamonds north of the Orange River, perhaps the richest strike in history ; and he died on the Thames Embankment in London, practically down-and-out, while seeking capital to exploit his discovery.

I never reached Cornell's favourite hunting grounds, for near Bitterfontein I met the Man of Destiny in the Battered Car.

CHAPTER III

THE MAN OF DESTINY, AND A LONG DETOUR

I

THE first I saw of him was little more than a pair of shoes. The rest was under the car. His first words were pungent, pointed and unprintable. Watered down, they may be expressed as :

“ Will you get out of the how-and-which light ! How the whatsoever can I see to fix this here-there-and-everywhere split-pin ? ”

I was not amused. I also was tired, dusty and irritable. There was sand down my neck, in my ears, nose and mouth. I also had sweated more than my share on the hottest day yet experienced on the trek, and Sir Walter had not been faultless. I had suffered a puncture and a broken chain (or perhaps I should say that Sir Walter suffered them and I repaired them).

I mounted again.

“ Where the devil are you off to ? ” A head appeared from beneath the car. “ Hell, I’m drunk again ! ” (Those last four words are a veracious, verbatim report, but it is unhappily impossible to indicate on paper exactly how they were said. Surprise, incredulity, horror, resignation, all had their place in the tone of voice.)

Then the Man of Destiny scrambled out from

his uncomfortable position. I promised not to give his name, but he told me I could say all the rest, so for brevity's sake, supposing we call him M. o. D.

"I'm real enough," I told him. "On a cycling trip from Capetown."

"Dammit!" he decided. "Then it's you who are drunk—or mad! I've seen things like you at home, droves of 'em on the Portsmouth road. There are flocks of 'em in Capetown and in and around other towns; even natives now ride the contraptions; but here, where even my blankety so-and-so car won't go—where in heck d'you think you're heading for, anyway?"

"Across the Orange River into South-West," says I.

"Across the—— Elephants and elders of the Reformed Dutch Church preserve us!" (A verbatim report again; I should never have thought of combining those two giant forces.)

We eventually sat side-by-side on the running-board, and he told me things. He came from South-West; he farmed there (for his sins, he said). He was on holiday ("Some how-and-which holiday!"), and was motoring through to Capetown. His car was a gem, built in America to stand up to rough country. In all the years (ten, I think he said; it may have been more) that he had had it, it had never let him down. He had crossed the veld, climbed mountains in it, taking everything in its stride. It would do anything that a military tank can do, except open fire. It was the light of his eyes, the joy of his heart, the sole prop of his unhappy life—and yet, this car of cars had stuck I forget how many times, had choked itself with sand, and had come within an ace of failing

to get through a stretch of the country between where we met and the railway in South-West Africa.

"They told me before I started that the road is not bad, except for corrugation," he declared. "That there are no extensive tracts of thick sand—they're right there; it's all piled in one place!"

The sand was not all. Rain up in the Free State had caused the Orange River to come down in flood. Only those who have seen an African river swell in a matter of moments from a trickle to a torrent, a puddle to an ocean, can appreciate what that meant. The Orange River is an adept at such tricks. When it comes down in flood it sweeps everything before it, playfully submerging railway bridges, converting arid, parched land into deep water, all in the twinkling of an eye.

Lives had been lost already, M. o. D. told me, people swept away at the fords, others snatched off the banks.

Finally, he repeated what I had heard in Cape-town, but he spoke from first-hand experience. The moment I reached Bitterfontein I would become an object of suspicion. In these enlightened days men are not supposed to be so crazy as to potter along through a slag heap of a land on bicycles. Even motorists are considered abnormal unless some definite business takes them that way.

"You say that you can't spare a lifetime on this job; there are other things you want to do before you grow too old," M. o. D. reasoned. "Well, you'll become senile before you get through north of here. Take my tip: cut back and work round to Upington. Then follow the railway into South-West. It is your only hope."

I hesitated for a long time. I would have to go back on my tracks for many weary miles, but even that would be better than getting stuck somewhere in the region of the river, and either remaining there for some indefinite period, or turning back then.

"If we can tie your machine on somewhere, and if I ever get this bus to tick over again, I'll run you back to the railway," said the Man of Destiny ; and that settled matters.

After we had both barked our knuckles, banged our heads, and grovelled in the sand, with oil trickling on to us, we tied Sir Walter to the spare wheel, and despondently I turned my back on Bitterfontein and the Orange River. Occasionally in the days which followed, I admit to wondering if M. o. D. exaggerated the difficulties, so as to provide himself with another pair of hands to take the car to pieces to trace troubles, other shoulders to push the incredible machine when it stuck, and a pair of ears to listen to his florid, vitriolic opinion of motoring in Africa as a pastime. My suspicions may have been grossly unfair, betraying base ingratitude ; if so, he is bound to write and tell me what he thinks of me, when he reads this. On the other hand, he might even confess ; for he is an astounding individual, capable of anything. No one else could have driven that car, for it was reinforced with wires and gadgets never visualized by the makers.

He had started his trip with a native boy in attendance, but—"the fool fell out ! Where is he now ? How should I know ? Of course I stopped, to see if he'd broken my suitcase, which he took with him, but he must've landed on his feet. He's probably still running in a northerly

direction. He lives up that way. Have you ever tried to run down an ostrich? Neither have I. That boy could have given it a hundred yards start!"

He told me something about the country beyond Bitterfontein. A few unfortunates try to farm up that way, but diamonds and copper account for most of the white population, which includes the usual sprinkling of administrative officers and missionaries. Americans control most of the copper, for they have taken over the assets of the old Cape Copper Company, which built the little spur of railway from Port Nolloth to Ookiep, and have been prospecting extensively for the past ten years. But owing to the slump in the price of copper, even the famous Concordia Mine has closed down, all production being at a standstill. With war talk rife in Europe, however, and all nations embarked on enormous rearmament programmes, the copper belt in Namaqualand will come back into its own again and more men will be exiled to that corner of the world's slag heap.

Such farmers as there are in that region have a bigger grouse even than the average English agriculturist, for the rigid government control of the diamond areas has hindered everything, including the prospecting for copper, so that no benefit has been felt by anybody from such discoveries as have been made. In fact, it is best to forget that the word "diamond" exists, when travelling anywhere in Namaqualand.

"Diamonds," says you.

" — — — — — diamonds!" says the unfortunate doomed to reside in the neighbourhood.

Strangely enough, most South Africans know Namaqualand because it is a freakish whim of Nature's to carpet this slag heap in springtime with one of the most profuse and beautiful displays of wild flowers imaginable.

Because Old Faithful (The Car-which-never-fails) suffered alternately from internal disorders, due to sand in the system, and blow-outs, it took us considerably longer than it might to do the 150 odd miles back on my tracks and across the Bokkeveld Mountains to the railhead at Calvinia. We camped one night together, if folding oneself up with M. o. D. and his extensive assortment of baggage in the back of the car can be called camping, and as though two men, a number of suitcases, a bag of golf-clubs, some very smelly pelts, a bag of groceries, an ox-tongue in a paper parcel, several bottles and various miscellaneous objects, were not sufficient for the confined space, we found towards morning that we had quite a length of snake in with us.

I found it when dislodging quantities of baggage in the attempt to find somewhere to stretch a pair of legs which have always been too long, and the next few moments were swift, blood-curdling and destructive.

M. o. D. did not start that day's journey in a good humour. In fact he told me that for two pins I could take my bicycle and get on with my own comic business. It seems that his Number Three iron was his favourite club, and I broke it on the snake. I also broke other things. He complained that the snake had probably lived there for a considerable time, in which case it was as much his property as the golf-club and the car, and I, a stranger, a waif picked up on the road, had

repaid his kindness by destroying the first, decapitating the second, and battering new dents in the third. But he did not say that until after we had had a drink to steady our nerves, for an encounter with a snake is an unpleasant reminder that there are many more pleasant ways of dying.

My journey through the Cape had been pleasantly free of what people in civilization call, with bated breath, "encounters with wild animals," but M. o. D. and his car seemed to serve as a magnet to attract such incidents, for during the day we met a leopard.

Old Faithful (The Car-which-never-fails) had come to an abrupt stop on a hill, the radiator boiling like a kettle. The last of my water supply had previously been sacrificed, but as there was a leak in the radiator, and I suspected the fan only revolved when we were looking at it, that machine drank like the proverbial fish. We had stopped in what seemed to be entirely barren country, a sandy, rocky waste of bizarre shaped hills mounting to a wide, karoo-like expanse, but M. o. D. knew all about water in arid districts. He told me that men who live in such places acquire a sixth sense, and that it was strongly developed in him. He "smelt" water somewhere down in the valley, so he took a couple of empty oil-tins (which I forgot to include in my list of bed-fellows the previous night) and went clambering down the hill.

I accompanied him because I also could do with a drink, and I had not washed for so many hours that my face and neck were taking on new contours. Somehow M. o. D.'s most outrageous statements could carry conviction, so that I believed that he really did know where there was some water. He took me for a lengthy hike,

during which we scrambled over rocks and barged through thorn-bushes, but because he was one of those rare folk who only become more facetiously voluble when everything seems to be going wrong and farce is bordering closely on tragedy, I feel that I should insert here the sort of notice that is found in the "agony columns" of the newspapers—"M. o. D. *All is forgiven.*" A man who continues to sing something about "mad dogs and Englishmen" after rolling down a rocky incline, leaving masses of himself upon various barbed thorns, and involving himself in a miniature landslide of sharp boulders, deserves to be a pioneer settler, a prop of Empire, and all the rest.

Anyway, he found the water and we found the leopard. The vicious spotted cat really had first claim to the shade around the puddle. I do not know which of us saw it first. I am afraid our eyes must have been equally sharp, while our brains worked simultaneously, and we both tried to do the same thing at the same moment.

I had brought a gun with me ; not mine, but his. For anything larger than a rabbit it was about as much good as a stick of Blackpool rock, for it was a .22 repeating-rifle. One of those things with which you insert the cartridges into a hole under the barrel, and then jerk a doings to make a shot come through into the chamber. Then all you have to do is alternately to jerk that doings and pull the trigger, and, provided such sections of the mechanism as the ejector, the striker, and various springs, are in working order, you pour a stream of bullets in the required direction.

"Leopard!" exclaimed M. o. D. "Give me that gun!"

He snatched it just as I was beginning to go

through the actions, and by the time we had apologized and decided who would do the shooting, the leopard had departed upon its sulky way.

We collected our water and returned to the car for the last stage of our journey together ; and as we headed for Calvinia, I was able to tell M. o. D. about George. (Not the whaler George ; another one.) The encounter with the leopard reminded me of him.

This George had a tame leopard, a gentle, inoffensive cat called Botha, which he had raised from a cub. George was working for a farmer and Botha was a bone of contention between them because the farmer kept chickens and Botha liked them. One night George was asleep when the infuriated farmer appeared at the door of his rondaval and told him that : " That damn leopard's in among the fowls again ! "

George leapt up. His sleep was ruined, and he realized that his job was in danger. He seized a stick and dashed out to the fowl run. True enough, there was the leopard, having the time of his life. George joined the fun. He used that stick like a flail and beat hell into Botha. Then he stalked across to the cage by his rondavel and opened the door to drive the criminal back into his home—and out bounded Botha !

II

I parted from the Man of Destiny at Calvinia. He had come many miles off his road to take me to the rail-head, and I shall always be grateful to him. Besides, his companionship was worth

unminted wealth. I do not think I fully appreciated how lonely I was at first. On other trips I have at least had one or more natives in attendance, but until I met M. o. D. I travelled alone.

I know that it was a mistake to do so. There were many occasions when one companion would have made all the difference. To cite only one instance, on that first night out from Capetown, I would have got some rest, had I had a companion to share with me the watch for the return of the "scollie-boys." Also, discomforts and even dangers dwindle surprisingly when shared. It is unnatural to laugh at oneself when falling off a bicycle, or to see the comic side of an encounter with any of the odd perils of such a trip, which invariably seem to have farcical trimmings.

The loneliness of such camps as mine is something too deep for words to convey. The absolute isolation after recent years in the noisy bustle of home made me feel a strange, complete detachment from the world, so that I could hardly believe that other folk were going about their normal lives, scuttling around in crowds, working and playing, just beyond my skyline of the moment. I felt as though I had jumped into space and come down on a different planet, whereon I was the only human.

Days went by during which I never heard a human voice, sometimes never so much as saw four-footed life, for much of the country I travelled through is almost entirely uninhabited through lack of water. Of course I talked to myself; one does; but I sympathize now with those who have to listen to my voice at home, for I soon bored myself.

The silence at night began to take on nightmare

properties. The African night is never entirely silent, never absolutely still. Under cover of the darkness insect and animal life goes about its nightly business, the strong preying on the weak, the weak risking death in the hunt for food. But there were times when it seemed to me that nothing was moving, nothing even breathing, except myself.

Man was never meant to be solitary ; he is not built that way ; and complete loneliness is as dangerous and habit-forming as any drug prohibited by law. I reached the pitch where I chased a native shepherd, glimpsed in the distance, for many miles off my route, simply so as to say : " Hullo, Funny-face ! " to him.

Calvinia is a typical little dorp stuck at the end of the railway. In the neighbourhood dour individuals indulge in sheep-farming, while others grow wheat along the rivers, but it is far from a farmer's paradise, for even irrigation has so far only served to bring to the surface deleterious salts out of the subsoil, so crops seldom come up to the most pessimistic expectations, if they mature at all. The railway runs 270 miles to join the main line at Hutchinson, passing through a district where " the pasture is poor ; where water, outside of the valleys, is difficult to find and inclined to be brackish, and where the land in parts can only carry one sheep per ten morgen " (a morgen being 2.11654 acres). The railway was built on the presumption that the district would eventually produce a million bags of grain per annum, which goes to prove that South Africa was pioneered by white men of various European races, collectively known as Optimists.

As the Man of Destiny had taken so much trouble

to convey me to a railway, I felt that I should travel by train. Besides, I was spending altogether too much time in the Cape, with my real job waiting to be done in South-West. But only two trains a week are scheduled, leaving Calvinia at 5 p.m. on Mondays and Fridays, and taking a matter of eighteen hours (all going well) over the journey of 270 miles.

We burst into town like some grotesque steam-engine, Old Faithful's radiator emitting steam like any locomotive, soon after darkness had fallen on a Monday, so of course the train had gone. I would have to wait four days for the next. M. o. D. had a date in Capetown for a dance, and as he already had the tickets (having paid a vast sum for them by post), and she was a very nice girl, he disappeared into the night at a suicidal speed after dropping me at the station. I am glad to say that I heard, on my return to Capetown a long time afterwards, that all four wheels stayed on Old Faithful during a run which must almost constitute a record, and that the lady proved all that a girl should be who partners a wild and woolly returned exile from the Great Open Spaces.

But that did not mean anything to me in Calvinia. A journey by car, together with the companionship of such a rare partner as the Man of Destiny, is most unsettling. It has much the same effect as stopping at a farmhouse or hotel during a trek, sleeping in a bed and eating at a table. Or perhaps it would be more intelligible to say that it is like a half-term holiday from school; the thought of returning to the old routine is most unpleasant.

I eyed Sir Walter with disfavour not far removed from hatred. I remembered occasions when he

had savaged me, thrown me from the saddle, and when I piled the kit on him he seemed to feel twice as heavy and unwieldy as before. I had planned to do the next stage by train, sitting in comfort on a padded seat, gossiping with fellow travellers. For South Africans do not travel like deaf mutes, as is the English practice. The man in the opposite corner of the compartment does not eye the communication-cord if addressed, nor show plainly that he is expecting any moment that you will bring out three cards and ask him to "Find the Lady." After a railway journey in England I can always appreciate the feelings of the famous comedian who, on passing a fish-monger's, glanced at the rows of cods' heads and muttered: "That reminds me—I've a matinee this afternoon!"

Between Calvinia and Hutchinson I had hoped to meet a number of interesting people and swap yarns and smokes, while moving rapidly towards my goal without any effort on my part. Instead I was faced with the alternative of spending four days in one of Calvinia's three hotels, or pushing pedals round on my own. I chose the latter course because the funds at my disposal were not unlimited and I had a long way to go. In fact, I began to see visions of going broke very soon, but no trip of mine would be complete without that happening. Friends and relations set aside whatever they can raise in my absence, in readiness for cables from outlandish places, all of which invariably begin: "Broke——"

Mention of Calvinia's three hotels reminds me that hotels seem to spring up all over South Africa like a rash. Villages of no size and less importance never seem to be content with one, and the

standard of comfort at most is remarkably high. Hotel-keeping seems to be almost as favourite an occupation as in French West Africa, where, if two white men live in the same place, one seems to start an hotel and the other lives there.

It took two and a half days to get from Calvinia to Kotjeskolk, a tiresome trek, only relieved by a storm.

Storms arrive over the African veld with startling abruptness. Banks of cloud pile up in the distance, below which a blue-grey opaqueness means rain, and one decides that it is miles away and certain to travel in some other direction. Then thin streaks of lightning run down to the horizon, splitting that opaque wall, while thunder rumbles menacingly, each peal coming nearer. Isolated clouds, forerunners of the storm, race overhead. But that is only the prelude.

After days of waterless trekking through a land which seemed to know nothing of the existence of such a commodity as rain, judging by the parched appearance of everything, I ignored the symptoms, but as night was drawing down I began to look for a camping site. Before long, however, the lightning was tearing the sky to shreds and almost blinding me, while the thunder cracked over my head like the snap of giant whips.

Darkness found me still plodding along, for I realized that this night I must have more shelter than the tent. I had passed a few huts and sheds, connected, I surmised, with the farming operations in the neighbourhood, but there was nothing of the sort in sight when night caught up with me. Through the blanket of darkness the lightning showed me vivid pictures of plain and hill and kloof, tense and motionless in the unnatural still-

ness which immediately preceded the actual breaking of the storm, as though reserving strength to withstand the first shock.

Then came the rain. It seemed as though the heavens split open, or someone tipped an enormous bath over me. So great was the force of water that it almost swept me off Sir Walter. The wind, which had died away so completely, returned with renewed fury to buffet the rain into me and wrap my sodden clothes about my tired, chilled body.

Africa is like that—Kipling did well to call her “a woman wonderful,” cruel and capricious—no rain for months, and then a deluge; no water for man or beast, and then sufficient to float a large proportion of the British navy.

Hail got mixed up with the rain, rattling all over me like shot and stinging my sun-skinned face. But I was fortunate, for in other parts of the country that night they got hailstones the size of plums, cattle and sheep were stunned, and some natives even died.

I was certainly lucky, for one vivid flash of lightning, which rent the darkness, like someone moving the blind from across a lighted window, showed me the gleam of a corrugated-iron roof, with a ramshackle shed below it. Except for that streak of light I should have passed what was probably the only shelter for many miles, and been forced to spend a night in an inadequate tent—if I ever succeeded in pitching it—at the mercy of the worst storm experienced in the neighbourhood in living memory.

I had dismounted some moments before, for only a trick cyclist could have ridden against that tempest, so I pushed Sir Walter to the hut, a

scrambling, stumbling journey, during which I tore through puttee and leg on the barbs of a wire fence, and it was not until a long time later that I realized much of the dampness in my boot was blood.

Cold, weary, completely fed up, I reached the shelter of the hut to find it already occupied by a collection of litter and a smell, both of which defy description. I dare not hazard a guess as to the original purpose of the place, but at least the roof was reasonably watertight.

I made a fire, although I realized that it would not last long, because the only available fuel was the wooden tent-pegs that I had bought in Cape-town (because a pessimist pointed out that convenient sticks for the purpose do not lie around in treeless desert). I had long intended to jettison them, for they were heavy, but they paid their freight in full that night.

I then stripped and rubbed myself down with my only dry shirt. I had nothing to change into and my jerseys and mackintosh were dripping, so I wrapped the driest folds of the tent round me, and then crouched on the floor and watched the fire die away into embers which finally resolved into flakes of white ash. Meanwhile the rain and hail kept up a mad fandango on the iron roof, like ten thousand skeletons dancing their legs off.

I cursed the storm, and I cursed the madness which takes me away from a comfortable home on such trips as this. I have a house in England, on which I pay rent and rates. There are arm-chairs there, selected for comfort. Fires are always built on a vast scale, with prodigal disregard for coal merchants' bills. If I had the sense to be normal I would never stray far from one of those

chairs. The day when there was any romance and glory attached to wandering to far places died long ago.

"So you've been to Africa?" say the arm-chair adventurers. "Did you have a good swimming-bath on the boat? You missed a jolly good programme on the wireless—all about African cannibals. And Arsenal drew with Portsmouth while you were away."

And I can never think up an excuse good enough to satisfy even myself. Scientific research, blazing new trails, opening up the Dark Continent, all the excuses are outworn. I go simply because I cannot help myself, and because I like it. I have admitted it now! I am even glad that I sat in that derelict shed, together with the litter and the smell, while outside the elements went mad.

The dance of the skeletons on the roof rose to a frenzy, while the thunder brought visions of celestial stockmen rounding up cloud-cattle with much cracking of gigantic whips. The lightning lit the interior of the shed with spasmodic brilliance. It struck a rock, visible through a gap in the wall, with a queer *slick*, and threw a blue streak from there to another surface. And yet, long before the storm had blown itself out, I was asleep, wrapped like some grotesque chrysalis in the cocoon of tent canvas, too tired, after a hard day's pedalling to care if the world outside was topsy-turvy.

I awoke in the grey light of dawn, chilled to the marrow, to find a new world, cool and fragrant, and full of the sweet scent of water-satiated earth. A heavy oppression in the atmosphere which I had felt the day before, had gone, and the air seemed to have gained a new zest, a sparkle like

champagne, a "kick" like the most potent Cape brandy.

I solemnly believe I sang as I sorted out myself and my kit, mounted Sir Walter, and rode on to Kotjeskolk.

III

"Don't deal in futures!" is a golden rule for a trek like this. Being interpreted, it means—never anticipate the end of the journey. It never comes up to anticipations, good or bad. You find a place called B on the map, and you aim for it. On the way you let your imagination riot. It is marked quite large on the map, so it will be a large settlement. You will meet people, have a long cool drink. Possibly there will be a bath-tub. . . .

Eventually—although there is no certainty about it, because of the unreliability of most compasses—you arrive at B, where you find a couple of native huts and a half-breed you don't like, and who obviously has never heard of a bath-tub. When you go on to C you remember the disappointment. You make yourself miserable expecting to have a similar welcome ahead; instead you find the bath-tub, and beer as well! Or, when you were expecting a night by a lonely camp-fire, you have to put on a tie and revive your parlour manners at some old-established home-stead.

I expected a couple of days' rest in an hotel at Kotjeskolk, and then that padded comfort in a railway carriage, but less than two hours after arrival there—instead of being snug in the hotel—

I was perched on a wooden ledge in the guard's van of a goods train, swaying and bumping and clattering wherever the train chose to take me.

From Kotjeskolk a short spur of railway runs north through an irrigation settlement to the junction of the Fish and Zak rivers, and the goods train had come from there. I was looking for the hotel that I had been thinking of all day (as far as I know, Kotjeskolk is an exception to the general rule and hasn't got such a thing) when I saw the train. It consisted of an engine, a variety of assorted trucks, and the guard's van. It was on the point of departure, so there was no time to hesitate. My expectations had been a waste of brain activity as usual. Another lap of the journey began as soon as I had explained myself. Sir Walter was hauled aboard. The guard showed me the shelf (he called it a seat) which I could occupy ; then he disappeared. A moment later a jolt which almost hurled me to the floor signalled the train's departure, and after I had come to the decision that he had been left behind, the guard reappeared.

Drowsy, dirty, unshaved, my skin peeling extensively where the sun had blistered it, my clothing and kit an astounding, bedraggled mass as a result of the storm, I am surprised that the guard did not quarantine me in a cattle truck. He was a middle-aged man, an Afrikaner of Dutch extraction, but he showed no hesitation about talking English. During the hours that we were cooped up together in that van we discussed about every subject from international politics to the idiosyncracies of second-hand motor cars. He learnt all about my family, and I all about his. He sneered at Anti-British South African Nation-

alists, with their talk of secession, and to keep the topic going I immediately defended their case. He had been in South-West Africa for a short while, and was of the opinion that Germany would get it back. When I asked what made him think that, he replied that nobody else wanted it, so, as Germany must get somewhere to expand, it might as well be this encumbrance to South Africa.

I disagreed genuinely that time, although I kept as clear as possible from South-West African problems until I had been there and seen for myself. But I did point out that results seem to prove that population problems are not solved by the possession of colonies. England is twice as densely populated as Germany, in spite of the vast British Empire. In 1914 no more than 20,000 of Germany's population was scattered over her colonies, and, as for trade, in those days Germany's trade with her colonies was less than one hundredth of her total trade.

"I am heading for South-West Africa with as open a mind as possible, but I do believe that the return of her colonies to Germany would neither ensure Germany's prosperity nor the peace of the world," I admitted then, and reaffirm it now. "The possession of colonies made no difference in 1914; and as for the necessity of colonies as sources of raw materials, Denmark, for one, contrives without colonies, to maintain a higher standard of living and intrinsic prosperity than Belgium with vast colonial possessions. No, I don't think the return of South-West would do much to solve Germany's economic problems; returned colonies would principally serve Germany as political weapons. What interests me is the question of what effect the return to Germany

would have on the future of South-West Africa and its indigenous population, not what the return of her colony would mean to Germany."

The guard had other arguments to put forward, but fortunately we stopped at a siding where he had some shunting to do, so our half-baked debate was interrupted. By the time he had collected two trucks from the middle of a *mêlée*, shifting rolling-stock with an uncanny judgment—a general reshuffling of the train which took over half an hour—we were both ready for a cup of coffee and an *al fresco* meal. We both contributed from our supplies and heated the coffee over the funnel of the van's roof-light.

The hours slipped by, hours of perching on that little, narrow seat like a bird, and looking out along the train through the slit of glass set in a projection of the van wall (called, I believe, the side-light). With the extra trucks that we picked up the train was astonishingly long. I could scarcely believe that the moving lights and occasional red glow far ahead belonged to our engine. We seemed entirely isolated from it, for the trucks between were invisible in the darkness, and I wondered why trains are not provided with telephone communication between driver and guard. The only link between them is the guard's lantern. They travel together for hour after hour, across miles of country, and yet might be in two separate worlds. The guard has the loneliest lot, for the driver has the fireman with him. Jointly they are responsible for conveying from outlying sidings to the markets the produce of the various districts, and they are among the world's unsung heroes.

Goods trains give way before a Passenger, and

are shunted on to desolate sidings, where they wait for long, monotonous periods. We were lucky and were only side-tracked once all the way to Victoria West, and during that interval of waiting for the Passenger to appear, swinging its lighted windows round the curves until they resembled a string of jewels, I took the opportunity to have a shave and clean up.

Why do I leave my home and make these trips ? Here is one reason, which presented itself on that siding, while the passenger train clattered rapidly by, driver and guard calling a gruff " 'Night ! " at the open door of our van. Can you imagine anything more monotonously uninteresting and ordinary than shaving your face ? Probably nine men out of ten in England stand before a mirror and go through the same habitual motions practically every day of at least their working lives. But I can sit back and think of some of the places in which I have shaved, the variety of merchants who have shaved me. There was a Syrian, a fellow fourth-class passenger down in the hold of a French ship ; an Indian barber who learnt the art in gaol and had never practised on a white man before . . . on board ships ; outside tents ; sitting on a car's running-board, with water from the radiator ; in the " bathroom " of a trading-store in Senegal, with the French trader's dusky mistress watching through the curtain which separated me from the bedroom ; and now in the guard's van of a South African goods train. . . . There you have it : I pull up my stakes and go places so as to make shaving less of a monotonous habit !

I spring-cleaned the Hardinge appearance before reaching Hutchinson because I hoped to travel

on the mail train from the main-line junction to De Aar. The guard, who followed my example, sharing my laboriously boiled mug of water, told me that with luck I should catch a connection at De Aar for Upington.

The luck held. Thanks to the driver putting on an extra spurt of speed, and the guard helping me to sprint across the station with Sir Walter and the rest of my belongings, I caught the Mail. Life on a trip like this is full of Alice-in-Wonderland features. On that train were people who had left Capetown sixteen hours before. One of them recognized me. He had witnessed my departure, and I had to admit that I had travelled something over 200 miles by bicycle, 150 in the Man of Destiny's car, and 270 by rail, to get me where he had got in sixteen hours by going to Capetown station, buying a ticket, and taking his seat on the train.

The train was crowded, and I was not popular for I made a fifth in an already overcrowded compartment and my kit-bag opened voluntarily on its way on to the rack, and, of course, it had to be the sugar which escaped from its tin and spread around like snow. Natty folk, very elegant and urban, sniffed at my appearance (and perhaps something more, for I was wearing the same clothes that I wore in that shed), so I fled into the corridor and wished I was back on the road on Sir Walter. Eventually I found my way to the dining-car, where I startled the steward by an exhibition which must have reminded him of all that is said about the capacity of boa-constrictors. I felt thoroughly sheepish and out of place, but finally drank beer with a Jew from Germany, who was seeking a new home before the Union

put up a barrier against his kind. It seemed to me that I was eyed with suspicion, not unmixed with fascinated expectation. I believe folk were waiting for me to get fighting drunk, throw bottles and things about, bring out a gun and start shooting, or in some similar way live up to my appearance as a tough guy from the wilds. Actually all I wanted to do was to bask in the comforts which civilization provides, eat what I had not prepared for myself, and consider my future plans.

At De Aar, Sunny South Africa was giving a good imitation of the sort of day that people leave England to escape, cold and grey, with rain falling monotonously, but my connection was there waiting, so I was carried in civilized comfort all the way to Upington, which, although it is eighty miles from the boundary, might be called the most frequented gateway of South-West Africa.

The first stage of my journey was over, the preliminary run finished. In spite of lengthy deviations and much lost time, I had reached the springboard from which to dive into former German West, Africa's Cinderella-land. Now to find the answer to those questions: Who lives there? Why? What do they do? What are the potentialities of the territory? Is it all desert? What do the inhabitants think regarding any possibility of return to Germany? What is Germany doing on the spot to further her interests?

Because, although not yet broke, I was distinctly "bent," I did not go to an hotel in Upington, but slunk out of town as unobtrusively as possible and made camp. An interlude of civilization was over. My fire looked good that night.

CHAPTER IV

ACROSS THE BOUNDARY

I

Just beyond Upington I met a prospector, a strange, shrivelled-up old man who matched his surroundings (much of the prevailing local dryness even had got into his sense of humour) and who had roamed the country thereabouts since the days of the German occupation.

I had wandered away from the railway when I met him, but the unfenced track, winding its way through that wild, rocky, desolate region, is too important to be dismissed so lightly. People up that way still consider it something of a miracle. The prospector informed me that when he first saw it he mistook it for some new-fangled mirage.

Until 1914 the Union had only taken the line as far as Prieska, and were well satisfied with that achievement, but the outbreak of war shook them up. The Germans had pushed their railway as far south as Kalkfontein, about sixty miles NNE. of Raman's Drift, over the Orange River (the drift I was originally heading for via Bitterfontein), and the strategic importance of that German line was suddenly appreciated. It was immediately decided that it was built solely for

the purpose of facilitating an invasion of the Cape Province.

So, immediately after the outbreak of war, feverish activity began in railway building quarters. The result was a remarkable tribute to the capabilities of the men on the job. Work commenced at Prieska on 31st August, and by 20th November, 1914, the 146 miles to Upington were completed, the lines actually being laid at a rate of two and a quarter to three and a quarter miles a day. Beyond Upington, through the arid, peculiar country, across which I trekked, the obstacles were even greater, so that progress became slower, but the task was completed, the other railway joined at Kalkfontein, by 25th, June 1915. The Orange River was spanned at Upington by a bridge which in itself is a fine engineering feat, at one time the longest in Africa (2,948 feet), but it was made too low. When the river is in flood the bridge is submerged, so a new bridge is now in course of construction, which is to be sufficiently high to defeat the most wayward antics of this dangerous humourist of a river. For the capriciousness of the Orange River is both a nuisance and a danger. When there are heavy rains up-country it often rises twenty-five feet in a few hours, whereas at other times, in the dry season, the mighty Orange, the largest river in South Africa, can be spanned in one place by a ten-foot plank. What a river! I am not likely to forget that, after all the difficulties of my journey, lack of water, big stretches of uninhabited country, an encounter with a lioness which was almost my finale, and all the other obstacles that I had to surmount, it was the Orange River that—right at the finish, when I thought I had nothing to do but let a train carry

me to Capetown to catch the boat for England—provided a final obstacle and almost reduced me to despair.

But that was in the future. It was a slightly swollen discontented looking stream when I left it behind at Upington. I headed more south-west than west, for I was afraid (as a result of my usual experience with compasses) of veering north, where that wide, death-trap land, the Kalahari Desert, stretched away for hundreds of arid, unmapped miles to the basin of the Zambesi. If I strayed that way and lost myself, my chance of survival would not be worth considering, for such few nomad native communities as there are only contrive to eke out a bare existence by wandering from one tsama melon patch to another. Men who lose themselves in the Kalahari seldom survive to talk about it, but I met a man once who wandered there in crazy circles for he was never certain how many days. He was mad when a police patrol found him, and only devoted nursing and care restored his reason, but nothing could be done for his hands. They were a reminder which he must keep for life. They were virtually worn down by grubbing crazily in the earth for the food that was not there.

The smoke from my fire brought the prospector to my camp, and he needed no invitation to share it, while I was glad of his company. We were both weary and uncommunicative until the chores were done and supper cooked and eaten, then we sat together, each with a steaming mug of coffee, and added tobacco fumes to the tang of wood smoke. The setting was romantic and might have been staged worse by any film director—the dwarf tent under a canopy of such stars as it seems only

deserts and the open sea can show above them ; on all sides the night shutting us in like walls, with nothing beyond our fire to break the blackness of it ; and the prospector's donkeys drawing close, as though they felt that they belonged in this after supper hour of rest and meditation. Romantic, real explorer stuff—but I am afraid our conversation was much interrupted by alternate choking and cursing, for a camp-fire is not all that it is cracked up to be. Wood smoke has a romantic ring to the combination of words, but actually it seems to blow in the least expected direction, so as invariably to find its way up the nostrils and into the throat ; and such fuel as I had been able to find that night produced a great deal more smoke than flame. Finally, the prospector suggested that I douse the damn' thing, and we sat by the storm-lantern instead.

He was, admittedly, a far from clean old man in appearance, typical of what should be labelled the Desert Rat. One sees such men on the films—the Pioneer Old-timers—reads about them in adventure stories and the *Wide World* magazine, and it is really incredible that the example before me should really exist. He so exactly fitted the picture of an old tramp prospector that I should not have been at all surprised if he tried to sell me a life insurance, or told me that he was really a stockbroker from Joh'berg on holiday.

But if he ever used a razor, the last time was long before I was born, and it took years to score those wrinkles around his eyes, years of peering at the ground in brazen sunlight. He was the real thing, a relic of that strange company of rolling-stones which formerly roved Africa. What moss they gathered most of them threw away in

hectic visits to civilization. They tried trading, hunting, transport-riding, but only for brief periods. Always they slipped off again on the alluring business of searching for elusive fortunes in hidden places. The only thing that most of them gained in the end was some slight knowledge of a most secretive continent, and a quantity of strange tales that their more sophisticated brothers at home set down as "tall stories," the most fantastic of which were most often the truest.

My companion of the night had roamed different parts of South Africa since early manhood, always seeking and never satisfied. He spoke with a queer, sing-song accent which at times made him hard to understand. If he was to be believed he had been a close friend of all the men who have made South African mining history in the past fifty years. He spoke of them all by their first names, usually with the prefix "Old." He had won fortunes and let them run through his fingers in the spacious days. He spoke of women whose names used to be by-words, but most of whom are either dead or have turned respectable. He described a lost Africa which sounded like a mixture of a wild west film and a catalogue of drinking bouts, well interlarded with gold strikes, diamond discoveries, and names that are history.

He knew South-West Africa like the palm of his hand. He knew the natives—the Hottentots are lazy, scattered, detribalized, and beneath contempt; while the Damaras—the Klip Kafirs, as he called them—are even lower. Even the other natives view them with scorn. The Bastards are mere windbags and just plain crazy, filled with absurd pride, with nothing to back it. The

Hereros on their reservations are also proud and aloof, the remnants of a fine native race, but beginning to pick up white men's vices to add to their natural stock, and, in common with the Hottentots and the rest, rotten with venereal disease. The Ovambo are the best of the bunch, because they are isolated, but he considered that none of them compared in mentality or physique with the natives over the other side of Africa, such as the Zulu or the Swazi.

I was beginning to learn things. Although the judgments of this old rover must be accepted with reservations, the people of South-West Africa were at least becoming something more than names.

As for the whites and the question of return to Germany—"They'd welcome it! They'd welcome anything in place of what they've got now. Nobody knows what's going to happen to-morrow. Besides, it's German now. You go into the towns. Mark the names you hear. Listen to 'em talk—German, German, German! And I tell you—those that aren't German, they don't care what happens so long as something does. I don't for one. There's gold here, copper, tin—but who's going to put capital into the place as it is? . . ."

He repeated himself monotonously, and became heated about it, so I changed the conversation, and in doing so, found that we had this much in common—we both liked to dig up scraps of history in the course of our travels. What happens in a place when one is passing through, and what is likely to happen there in the future, are at times interesting, even thrilling, but the first is a matter of chance—in so many places nothing happens—and the second can never be more than conjecture ;

but what has happened in the past is solid, unchangeable fact. In more spacious days before lightning-swift methods of communication, photography, and other aids to informing the far corners of the world what it is correct to wear and do according to London, Paris and New York, men lived vivid lives of action. Things happened which could not happen to-day. Explorers were not Society hostesses in search of a new thrill. Bandits were not gentlemen who say "Stick 'em up!" with a nasal accent, and finally go to prison for arrears of income tax; nor were they spoilt youths with complexes, suffering from a surfeit of movies and not enough action on the part of father with a stout stick.

It was about bandits that the prospector and I talked far into the night, for on an island in the Orange River below Upington was the impregnable lair of as ruthless, dashing an outlaw chief as ever sprang from the brain of a writer for the *Boys' Friend Library*. The prospector had a fund of stories about him, and I have since checked the facts in old records.

Jager Afrikaner, robber chieftain, was an Orlam, a generic term used in connection with the Hottentots of those days, who had acquired sufficient civilization from contact with white men to possess horses and guns and know how to take full advantage of both. The majority became filibusters and Jager Afrikaner was the Big Shot of the time.

The Government actually sent a certain Mr. Pienaar to Jager with ammunition, for someone had the brilliant idea that the Orlams should tame the Bushmen and so prepare the land for white settlement. (I have already suggested that Africa

was pioneered by a strange white race collectively deserving the name Optimists !)

The worthy Pienaar lived near Calvinia, of all places, a town which looked to me as though nothing more romantic than a prolonged drought and its £13,000 Dutch Reformed Church, could ever happen to it, but Pienaar was the sort of district Texas Ranger of his day. He joined Jager in his forays, thereby setting the seal of respectability on them, until the filibuster became bored and started his real career by shooting Pienaar.

Jager then took to the wilds, murdering and plundering, using that supply of Government ammunition to his best advantage. He made a robber stronghold on an island in the Orange River and began literally to paint the surroundings red with blood. Vagabonds and outlaws joined him in his lair, his band becoming almost as cosmopolitan as it was ruthless. There used to be a comic song about " the Argentines, the Portuguese and the Greeks " being ubiquitous, so, of course, they had to be represented. One of Jager's most notorious lieutenants was Stephanos, a Greek.

Streaming out from their island lair, across the country where the prospector and I sat over the storm-lantern and discussed their exploits, this band became the terror of the countryside. Jager caused the missionaries who had penetrated to that region to abandon their station and fly for safety, and that takes some doing. He waged unceasing war on all native tribes, looting their cattle and completely upsetting the balance of power in the neighbourhood (as tricky an acrobatic turn as was ever the balance of power in Europe).

He harried the pioneer white settlers and made history for the Griquas, for it was largely due to Jager Afrikaner's raids that the latter headed east across Africa and settled around Kokstad, for they were afraid to continue north.

I have my own opinion about the activities of missionaries, but no one can gainsay them their courage. After a large commando had failed to dislodge Jager from his island lair, the Reverend Ebner (what a name for a man who must have been as tough a hero as Jager was ruthless a villain!) persuaded the bandit to allow him to live at the robber camp. There is romance for you, history surpassing fiction, as usual. What a story could be written around the pair of them! What a film! The missionary's courage and patience, the bandit's gradual conversion. For converted he was, so successfully that, in 1819, Robert Moffatt (David Livingstone's father-in-law, the man whose influence drew Livingstone to Africa to put most of it on the map) took Christian Afrikaner (as he had re-baptized himself) to Capetown for an audience with the Governor, who dismissed the robber chieftain with presents. A more satisfying finish than languishing in gaol for unpaid income tax, or the conventional fiction climax of a clinch with the heroine.

II

In the course of our camp together the prospector told me what must rank with the tallest stories ever to come out of Africa, and probably because of the surroundings, and bearing in mind that

Kipling was right when he said that "the wildest dreams of Kew are the facts of Khatmandhu," I almost believed it at the time.

He told me of a man we will call Miller, who lost himself in the Kalahari desert. Miller was a strange individual to wander about that wilderness. Soft-spoken and mindful of his manners even in mining camps, he had once been a schoolmaster. But between the intervals of filling unresponsive brats with English he acquired the habit of filling himself with Scotch, so, after he had mixed the two jobs irretrievably, his relatives persuaded him to emigrate. He came to Africa and drifted, finally setting out into the Kalahari, straying from the Government wells and losing himself.

He went the way of many others, wandering in frenzied, crazy circles, gradually becoming even crazier. He had a quantity of patent compressed foods with him—special scientific stuff of high nutritious value packed in a small space—trust a schoolmaster to get hold of stuff like that, so he was not immediately in as dire a plight as others who have strayed from the few trails across the Kalahari. His tablets kept him alive, but his unstable brain soon lost any pretence at balance.

Then he met the woman, but don't prick up your ears and hope for some nice little romance—man and girl in the desert, and all that. She was a native woman, a member of one of the off-shoot tribes of the Bechuana, a wife of many years standing and mother of a not inconsiderable family.

She had lagged behind a native caravan to give birth to her latest, intending to catch up and join the trek, all unconcerned, as these women do; but she had taken the wrong turning. She also was lost.

Well, Miller told her to tag on to him, and spoke confidently of finding the way to safety, which just shows how mad he was, for she knew the desert better than a white man ever would. He then began to let his mind consider possibilities, most dangerous procedure of all in such circumstances. He considered what he had done in the world and what he might have done. Then he looked at the child, fastened to the woman's back with a dirty cloth. A boy it was, the usual queer creature, with a vast dark head.

"For all I know, there lies the saviour of his people, the Napoleon, the Toussaint L'Ouverture, the Masaryk—the patriot to bind them together and lift them to greatness," thought Miller, and his mind began to evolve other historical analogies.

The result of all this brain action was that he started to starve himself, while he forced his food on to the woman. Although she did not understand a word of what he said, he delivered long lectures on her responsibilities to posterity as the mother of the saviour of her people; and all the time he made her eat and drink, while his mind gradually lost any hold on realities that it had retained up to then.

One can imagine him, insisting breathlessly: "I'm not just doing this for you. You're the intermediary, if you understand—the food is for him——"

Before long, however, words failed him altogether. His great dreams merged into one long, unbroken dream; he knew nothing of time or what was happening—and it was in that state that he was found.

He had told the woman to take the food and the boy and go on, but she was found there with him.

The child ~~was~~ dead ; it had been dead quite a few days—starved to death——

“ But I don’t understand——” I protested, for the prospector paused there in his story, and began to knock out his pipe preliminary to turning in. “ Miller sacrificed himself so that the child should survive——”

The old scoundrel nodded.

“ Aye, but the woman had her own ideas on who should survive, and she plumped for the white man. She didn’t feed the child ; she fed Miller and just kept him alive——”

The next morning the prospector left me before dawn, borrowing what he needed from my supplies (without wasting breath over asking for the loan of it) and I shall probably never see him again. Unless we meet at some literary gathering in London, for I now suspect he was really a society novelist in search of local colour for an epic of the Kalahari.

III

The country beyond Upington is some of the most desolate that I have experienced. The drought-ridden, hard-baked soil is littered with stones ranging from pebbles to mammoth boulders, between which grows a variety of dry, withered bush, stunted to knee height and looking to have no more succulence in it than a stick of kindling. But sheep and goats are astounding animals ; I believe they would feast in a timber yard.

Eighty miles west of Upington are the great falls of the Orange River. They were off my course, but I have come upon the following description of them. Hedley A. Chilvers had Jager Afrikaner in mind when he wrote :

"Those privileged to see this tremendous spectacle, the Great Falls of Aughrabies, and who know something of the history, will perhaps discover the ghosts of requiem in the roar of the waters—a lament for the coloured nomads who once lent so picturesque a savagery to the solitudes.

"The Orange River is just about a mile wide above the main fall, and is split up by boulder-strewn islets of granite, so that one is reminded as one looks at them of Jager Afrikaner and his blood-thirsty vagabonds who selected some such place for their river stronghold. The mighty flood converges until barely sixty feet wide, and at this point—the lip of the main fall—it plunges into a fearsome abyss 400 feet deep. Then it races for miles through a gloomy canyon, the walls of which loom up to a height of 500 feet. On all sides cascades drop laterally into the vast and desolate gorge.

"The first man to see the falls was a soldier deserter from the East India Company, Hendrik Wikar, who came upon them in 1778. Impressed, possibly, by the forbidding scenery, he sent back messages imploring pardon, and this was at last granted. It was George Thompson who, in 1824, and after being four days without food, tightened his famine girdle and came upon the falls at sunset.

As I gazed upon this stupendous scene,' he wrote in his diary, "I felt as if in a dream . . . I named the scene 'King George's Cataract,' in honour of our gracious sovereign."

Their name on the map to-day, however, is that given them by the Hottentots, "Aughrabies," which means "Roaring Waters."¹

And to think that that is the same river which can be spanned in the dry season by a ten-foot plank!

I intended to visit this mighty cascade of waters, but, like the woman in the prospector's story, I took the wrong turning and found no water at all. Drought is ten million times more tormenting when one knows of millions of gallons of water sweeping down to provide one of the stupendous spectacles of the world within a few miles of where one struggles along with tongue swelling and lips cracking for want of a teaspoonful. I must not blame the compass this time. The trouble is that I am never certain whether I should add or subtract the variation, and when I toss up to decide, the coin deceives me.

That was admittedly a touch-and-go period of the trek. I was generally too weary, parched and irritable, to pause to think what the chances were of fading out as another example of a gambler who has taken one chance too many. The country seemed devoid of both water and inhabitants. It was simply a slag heap of tumbled rocks, over which—when I could not steer between—I dragged Sir Walter and his load. The dread began to grow in my mind that I was moving in circles, although I realized later that I could not have been, for I could see the Great Karas Berg mountains ahead and I knew that Kalkfontein lay beneath them. They were the only objects of any size on the landscape, although here and there were scattered grotesque kopjes which seemed to be formed of

¹ From "The Seven Wonders of Africa," by Hedley A. Chilvers.

loose boulders, piled one on top of the other to form a pyramid, as though placed there by some playful giant.

I knew that somewhere was the railway, but looking for it was like seeking the proverbial needle in a haystack. I decided that the effort was waste of time and precious strength, so simply plodded on towards the mountains. I had plenty to trouble me, for I had a swollen foot, although I could find no trace of a sting or bite to account for it. It simply puffed up to abnormal proportions, the flesh turning slightly blue, and was almost as painful to the touch as a boil. I tried lancing it, cutting as deep as I dare, and then rubbing in permanganate of potash, but do not know if that did much good, for I failed to find the seat of the trouble. I also had unwelcome companions in my hair around this time. As they were so minute as to be almost invisible to the naked eye I never identified them, but they caused my scalp to itch like the devil, and sent horrid tickling sensations down my neck when they took their daily walks. As they were also nocturnal in their habits they disturbed such sleep as I tried to get. At one crazy moment I went so far as seriously to consider setting fire to my hair and disposing of them that way. The madness that comes on men in deserts cannot have been far away then. I know I even struck a match before sanity reasserted itself.

There is not much of me, except in length ; in fact, my doctor in England says that I am a " disgrace to my victuals " ; but what there is must consist chiefly of leather and bones, for although I had no water to wash with, that foot never poisoned completely, and the many scratches and cuts

that I collected from thorn-bushes and Sir Walter healed cleanly with the least possible delay. When a spoke broke loose from Sir Walter's front wheel and impaled the ball of my thumb, I could neither spare water, nor work up enough moisture on my tongue to wash the rust away from around the punctured flesh, and blood-poisoning should, undoubtedly, have set in by all the canons of hygiene, but nothing happened beyond the repetition of a number of strikingly descriptive adjectives.

That was one advantage about the incident : I could express myself without the interruption—" Rex, not in front of the children ! "

When I say that the country was uninhabited I do not mean that it was lacking entirely in fauna. There were quite a number of springbok around—those supremely graceful fawn-coloured gazelles, with long lyrate horns, which are included in the Cape coat-of-arms—and wild dogs besieged my camp.

I heard them first just as darkness fell. These vicious brutes have a most peculiar call at times, which rather resembles the " oo " note of a cuckoo's call. This is understood to be the rallying cry of the pack, and it seemed redundant at the time, for they must have rallied when they picked up my scent. Before long I could hear them moving around, their queer four-toed pads making an indescribable sound in the sand. Occasionally shadowy shapes showed up, to scurry off when I moved, for they are arrant cowards.

But they are destructive devils, hunting always in large packs. They lope along at an untiring gait and will pull down any antelope, even the huge eland. In appearance they are about the size of a wolf, with blunt muzzle and sloping back, standing

slightly over two feet at the shoulder, and coloured a variegated, blotchy black and white. They are obviously relations of the hyena and share his unpleasant habit of making a meal off a man's face before he wakes up.

So I got little sleep that night, although I was far too weary to do without altogether. Finally, I evolved the plan of sending a bullet among the scurrying shadows when they drew close. Babel soon informed me if I had hit a mark, and when this happened I contrived to snatch forty winks while the pack devoured the deceased, only to awake with a start to find them drawing dangerously close again. In the morning all that remained by the camp was the mark of their pads and a quantity of well-picked bones.

Undoubtedly not a restful night, and the dose was repeated on later occasions. These wild dogs roam far afield in their destructive hunt for something to pull down, but, rightly or wrongly, I took their appearance as a good omen, for I told myself that there must be water near at hand.

That was entirely fallacious reckoning, simply an attempt to bluff myself, but I found the water the next day, and eventually—after going far out of my course and covering a great many more miles than the proverbial crow would have done—I crossed the frontier somewhere north of Nakob, but it was not until on the way back that I saw the boundary board, like an advertisement hoarding. (I mistook it in the distance for still another appeal to drink that popular beer.)

BOUNDARY

Cape Province—South West Africa

The first-lap on my run was over. When Kalkfontein showed up, like an oasis in the desert, and I heard German spoken on all sides and found all official notices printed in three languages, I knew that I had definitely arrived. My job was just beginning.

“What are you?” I asked the first native that I met. He did not understand me, but proved to be a Hottentot.

CHAPTER V

SOUTH-WEST AFRICA

It has occurred to me that very few people know much about South-West Africa. On the map it will be found as a vast expanse of red immediately below Angola, on the west coast, south of the Congo. (On most maps Angola is coloured green, so South-West Africa is the red expanse immediately beneath the most southerly green !)

In the Appendix I have quoted the Report of the South-West Africa Commission on the subject of Nazi Activities, and I think it best to quote that same Report, thereby giving an official description of the territory into which Sir Walter took me.

I started on this trek with such bald facts as the following in mind, and it will be as well for the reader also to be supplied with them. Remember that they constitute the Description Of Country given in a Government Blue Book (U.G. 26, 1936).

1. South-West Africa is a very extensive country, covering an area of 317,725 square miles or 822,909 square kilometres. It stretches from the Orange River in the south to the Angola Border in the north, a distance of about 800 miles, and from the Atlantic Ocean in the west to the border of the Bechuanaland Protectorate in the east, an average distance of 350 miles.

2. Its area is slightly more than two-thirds of

that of the Union and over 5,000 square miles more than that of the Cape and Natal Provinces together. It is much larger than France and more than twice the size of Italy and carries a population estimated at 267,000, of whom only about 31,600 are Europeans.

3. Large tracts of it are uninhabited. The inhabited portion may be said to be wedged in between two deserts—the Namib in the west and the Kalahari in the east. The Namib, which varies in width from 50 to 90 miles, stretches from the Kunene River in the north down the whole length of the Territory. It is an arid region where rain seldom falls and which is almost devoid of vegetation. Except for the coastal towns of Swakopmund, Walvis Bay and Luderitz, this portion of the country, covering an area of over 40,000 square miles, is uninhabited and practically uninhabitable.

4. The southern portion of the Territory from the Orange River to about 70 miles south of Windhoek is not unlike the districts of Namaqualand and Gordonias in the north-west of the Cape Province. It is mainly suitable for small stock farming, but owing to the low annual rainfall, the severe droughts to which it is periodically subject, and the great heat in the summer, farming in that portion of the country is often accompanied by such hardship and privation that only people of a certain type, such as the "trekboer," will be able and prepared to endure it.

5. North of this, the central portion of the Territory is mainly grass country studded with large thorn trees. This central portion, although subject to droughts, is blessed with a better and regular rainfall and is eminently suited for cattle-

farming, particularly of the ranching type. Even here, however, farming is dependent on underground water, which is often found only at great depth. Accordingly, except in a few isolated cases, farming operations can be carried on only where bore-holes have been sunk and windmills erected. Moreover, a large farm is required to afford a family a living, with the result that the population is thinly scattered over a large area, and the farms are great distances away from the nearest railway station or village.

6. According to our evidence, the present surveyed farming area is 126,900 square miles, divided into some 3980 farms. This means that on the average a farm comprises nearly 32 square miles (approximately 9700 morgen). Yet even on such huge farms it is frequently difficult to make a living, and in a great drought the carrying capacity of the veld is reduced to practically nil.

7. The extreme north of the Territory is comprised of the tracts of land known as the Kaokoveld (in the west), Ovamboland, the Okavango Area and the Caprivi Zipfel (in the east). These parts all lie outside the area known as the police zone, and, except for a few Europeans connected with the Government service or missionary work, are inhabited exclusively by natives numbering nearly 150,000, which is, roughly, three-fifths of the total non-European population of the Territory.

8. The 31,600 European inhabitants of the Territory live inside the police zone. Of these, about 40 per cent are estimated to be of German origin and the remaining 60 per cent mainly of Dutch and British origin. Inside the police zone there are also about 90,000 non-Europeans, consisting of approximately 24,000 Hereros, 24,000



ONE OF THOSE ETERNAL KOPS. SOUTH OF WINDHOEK

Damaras, 20,000 Hottentots, 9000 Bastards or coloureds, 5000 Bushmen and 7000 Ovambos.

9. The density of the population in the Territory is 0.84 persons to the square mile of which 0.1 are Europeans and 0.74 non-Europeans. The density inside the police zone is 0.62, of which 0.16 are Europeans and 0.46 non-Europeans. At the census of 1926 the density of the European population in urban areas was 5.8 and that in rural areas 0.045 persons to the square mile. In fact, outside the few urban centres, a European was almost as difficult to find as the proverbial needle in the haystack.

10. A large portion of the native population is concentrated in Ovamboland, which has a density of approximately 6.6 persons to the square mile. In several respects this area is well-favoured in comparison with the rest of South-West Africa. The soil is of a sandy, alluvial character, and it is extremely difficult to find a stone in Ovamboland. The rainfall, while low and irregular, is higher and more regular than that of the rest of the Territory.

Both Ovamboland and the Okavango (a strip about ten kilometres wide between the river and the desert) contain considerable areas suitable for agriculture, while, with the exception of a few areas in the districts of Grootfontein, Omaruru and Windhoek and a few areas in the south, where artesian water is available, there is very little agricultural soil in the Territory.

11. When Germany proclaimed a Protectorate over South-West Africa in 1884 the Hereros and Hottentots had for many years been living in a state of what amounted to almost perpetual war with each other. In 1926 the late Mr. Justice

Jacob de Villiers, who subsequently became Chief Justice of South Africa, was appointed Commissioner to enquire into and report upon certain matters relating to the Rehoboth Reserve. In his report (U.G. 41, 1926) he deals very fully with the origin and the history of the native races of South-West Africa. Dr. Vedder, who has lived and worked as a missionary in South-West Africa since 1903 and has made a special study of the Native races there, considers the account given of them in the report as fair and accurate.

12. In paragraph 52 of his report it is stated :

“ Before the establishment of the white man's rule in South-West Africa, the country was in a state of perpetual war. Uncertainty and insecurity reigned even after the arrival of missionaries and traders, whose persons and property were only too often treated with violence.”

13. The first ten years after the proclamation of the Protectorate were fairly peaceful, but thereafter the German authorities were from time to time involved in military operations against one or other Native tribes, until 1904 when a rebellion broke out in which all the leading Native tribes joined against German authority. It was only in 1907 that this rebellion was finally crushed. Thereafter, peace reigned in South-West Africa until the outbreak of the Great War in 1914.

14. From 1907 to 1914 the Germans devoted themselves to the settlement and economic development of the country. The discovery of diamonds and the subsequent building up of a considerable diamond industry greatly assisted in this development. But even so, South-West Africa was not at any time under German rule

able to support itself. Although the Natives had been reduced to a state of subjection, their presence in the country, with the legacy of bitterness not unnaturally left by the suppression of the last rebellion, necessitated the maintenance of a strong military force, on which, as well as ordinary policing, large sums of money had to be spent annually.

15. At the outbreak of the Great War the European population of South-West Africa was 13,011; of these 1819 were military, and of the rest the bulk were settled in towns. In the district of Windhoek, and farther north, especially in the districts of Okahandja, Omaruru, Otjiwarongo and Grootfontein, a number of Germans were farming, some on a considerable scale, with cattle. In the extreme south, however, very few white farmers had settled.

16. Soon after the outbreak of the Great War, South-West Africa was invaded and conquered by Union troops under General Botha. The defeat of the Germans in South-West Africa and the occupation of the Territory by Union troops appear to have given great satisfaction to the non-European races, who saw therein their release from German rule, and the restoration of the independence which they enjoyed before the country came under the sway of Germany. In this, however, they were doomed to disappointment. It is clear that, if the different tribes with their turbulent and warlike habits had been left to themselves uncontrolled and unsupervised, the country would soon have slipped back into a state of barbarism in which constantly inter-tribal feuds would have made the peaceful avocations of life an impossibility.

17. The country remained under the military occupation of the Union until 1920, and after the war its future was determined by the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles. In terms of article 119 of that Treaty, Germany renounced in favour of the Principal Allied and Associated Powers all her rights and titles over her oversea possessions, including South-West Africa. Thereafter, the Principal Allied and Associated Powers gave the Mandate of the Territory to the Union Government to be administered under the provisions of the Covenant of the League of Nations.

CHAPTER VI

HOT WORK AND HOTTENTOTS

I

BEYOND Kalkfontein, in the region of the Great Karas Berg mountains, I evolved a new method of hunting, which was as Heath-Robinson as possible, but served its purpose. I was not on a hunting trip and did not shoot a single buck throughout, contenting myself with smaller stuff for the pot. At different times I came upon many guinea-fowl. These are ridiculous birds when flushed. They have a queer, ungainly, unathletic run, and never seem able to make up their minds whether to fly or not. They remind me of old ladies in a dither. When they do leave the ground their flight is a blundering, drunken business. Before now I have thrown sticks and stones, and shouted "Scat ! Fly will you !" to make them rise, rather than blot my copy-book by shooting them on the ground.

On this trip I had not got a shot-gun, so I manufactured a catapult, an astonishing affair of valve-tubing, Y-stick and an old rag, with which I never hesitated to shoot into the brown of a sitting flock. (The odds were in the latter's favour, for I never knew in which direction the stone was likely to travel, if it left my fingers at all.)

Near Kalkfontein there is an aerodrome : in

fact the modern world keeps insinuating itself by these wide expanses of reasonably levelled land, decorated with a tin shed, a petrol pump, and a wind-sock, for I came upon no less than five on my journey northwards.

The bush was smaller beyond Kalkfontein than on the Upington side, but slightly less scattered. There is not so much stone, although still plenty, and the sandy soil has a more reddish tinge. The same strange, pyramid-shaped kopjes crop up, over-topped by the Great Karas Berg. This mass of mountains is about sixty miles long by twenty broad, and much of the plateau and the long valleys are unexplored, although scientists know that many peculiar varieties of insect life are to be found there, while game is plentiful. Lord Hill, one of the western summits, towers up to over 7000 feet.

The saucer-like plain below, in which Kalkfontein is situated, is dotted with strange types of Euphorbia and nutritious salt bushes, which look burnt up but prove excellent feed for sheep, but farms in the district have to be on a vast scale, for it takes twenty acres to maintain one sheep.

I climbed high into the mountains, explored long, lonely valleys, crossed wide river-beds as dry as the proverbial dust, although at some not so distant time great streams flowed down them. My eyes throughout this period of the trek seemed always to be straining towards the horizon, not because I was so eager to see what lay beyond, but because I was looking for the friendly sight of a windmill towering skywards, for that meant water, and water was still my problem. I existed for whole days on microspic rations of luke-warm,

brackish stuff, and it was only when I reached a farmer's well, or a settlement, that I could drink my fill.

I stayed overnight at occasional homesteads, and began to ask my questions. At one place, an isolated, square, tin-roofed house, at the top of rising ground, with a dried-up wilderness on all sides, I was told that I could have a shake-down on the dining-room floor. My host took me in there and gave me a good meal, and I observed how tastefully his home was decorated. There was little of the pioneer homestead about that cosy room, with its imported furniture, bright cushions and curtains, ornaments on a shelf, pictures on the wall, and silver on the sideboard. Then we moved to the verandah for a drink and a smoke, while a mattress was laid on the dining-room floor for me, and when I went to rest I realized how badly my appearance served me. All the ornaments, the silver, even the pictures on the wall, had been removed and doubtless locked away in some safe place. I expect the farmer had a restless night, listening for my depredatory movements, with a gun ready to his hand.

Other homes were less elaborate, the furniture home-made, the floors occasionally nothing but the hard-beaten earth (plastered with the usual mixture of cow-dung and water and polished until they shone), but I was always made welcome. I began to learn things about the white point of view concerning the present state of affairs in South-West Africa, and to discover that, in the main, the old prospector had spoken truly—even English-born settlers would welcome a return to Germany, anything in preference to the present state of stagnation—but I stored my impressions

away in my mind until I could sort them out and set them against others.

I visited native homes, which were scattered and often hard to find. The huts were the usual beehive shape—like an inverted U—but differed in construction from those of East Africa. They were principally formed of a framework of pliant sticks, over which were fastened rush mats and the skins of animals. Modernity has made many of them less picturesque, for now sacks, cloth, odd scraps of corrugated-iron and even paper, take the place of the coverings that Nature formerly provided, for the increasing aridity of the land, which seems to become drier annually, makes grass and reeds hard to find and drives four-footed providers of coverings away towards the better watered regions in the north.

The natives in this area are principally Hottentots, and most of them are employed in various capacities by the whites, although reserves have been set aside for them.

It has been suggested, based on the discovery of old Nankin porcelain in the Zimbabwe ruins in Rhodesia, that these people are the descendants of Chinese who landed in Africa centuries ago looking for gold and made off with the aboriginal women, but such a romantic theory is best ignored until someone uncovers more proof. According to Theal,¹ the Hottentots come of the same original stock as the Bushmen, but even he could no more than suggest vaguely where those remote ancestors originally resided. Other authorities claim to have found words of Arabian origin in the Hotten-

¹ George McCall Theal, who made perhaps the most comprehensive study of African natives yet published, and with whom other experts differ slightly less than they do with one another.

tot language, and when first discovered in South Africa this strange race already knew how to smelt copper and iron, and had advanced beyond the Bushman of to-day.

In appearance the Hottentot has little that is pleasant about him. He is medium-sized, with a strange triangular face, a skin which in the purest-blooded of them is the colour of dry tobacco, and woolly hair which grows in short, scattered tufts. He is fundamentally lazy, but was formerly a great hunter, and at the present day works just as much as cannot be avoided for the whites. Most of the servants on farms and in towns are Hottentots, and in variegated cast-off European clothing most of them look a sorry sight, although they call themselves Khoi-Khoin, "Men of Men," and pride themselves upon their racial superiority.

In tribal days, and still to some extent in the reserves, the chief was elected from a ruling family, but his powers were limited. Their wealth was formerly counted in goats, sheep and cattle, the oxen from the latter being trained as pack and riding animals. I saw none of these latter during my trip, so the practice seems to have died out, but in the days when men like Galton and Andersson ventured through the territory they had many experiences, humorous and otherwise, with these unusual mounts.

The Hottentots still drink an abnormal quantity of milk, when they can get it, and all historical comments on their unclean habits remain true. I was given drinks and food in pots which can never have been washed, while the people find the prevailing state of drought all the excuse they need to refrain from using water on their bodies.

They suffered terribly as the result of the drought which ended in 1933, during which they lost almost all their stock, forcing even more of them to go out and work for the Europeans, and even their headmen and councillors are backward and unimpressive in appearance. Without continual help in their affairs on the part of the white men it is hard to imagine what would become of them, for they have deteriorated to an astounding degree since the days when they roamed most of Southern Africa as great hunters and warriors, always at war with their neighbours. Their attempts to fit themselves into civilized conditions are largely pitiable, and I left their homes with the feeling that here were people who must be wisely and continuously nursed by the administration.

I seem to have painted a drab, even sordid, picture of the Hottentots in South-West Africa, but they are indeed a backward, degraded race, only made more slovenly by their contacts with civilization, but their warlike spirit is not entirely lost, for as recently as 1922, the Bondelswartz in the Kalkfontein district objected to the enforcement of a dog tax. About three hundred of them took up arms, with something of the heroic fervour and national spirit which characterizes their early history, but were speedily suppressed by local forces.

I heard many complaints that the suppression was too ruthless, and there is more than talk of old wars whispered around their ugly, unclean huts, but they lack cohesion, and seem to have become too emasculated to produce again men like Jager Afrikaner and the famous Hendrik Witbooi, Orlams who made history. But the

majority of them do not forget such activities as the following on the part of the Administration.

In 1935, in the Bondels Reserve alone, after the drought had caused the people to lose almost all their stock and reduced them to desperate straits, the Administration caused all paupers and others belonging to the tribe to be concentrated in the Reserve and rationed. Wells were sunk, gardens laid out, and seeds supplied. The Administration also bought a herd of 500 goats, the milk from which was used for the children.

A zinc reservoir was erected at Heib where a new garden was laid out. Old gardens were enlarged. Seed was supplied. Connecting roads and dams built and repaired. Every able-bodied man who could be spared was found work outside the reserve on contracts under which he received one-third of his wages, two-thirds being remitted to the magistrate, out of which one-third was handed over to the labourer's dependents and one-third invested in goats, and it is hoped, in due course, with a couple of good seasons, to make the tribe self-supporting again.

Similar efforts were made in other reserves, the Administration shouldering its responsibilities as father and mother of the non-European people in the territory. One only has to glance back at the history of South-West Africa before white occupation to appreciate what that means.

The natives were always at war in those days. The Hottentots incessantly strove to tame "those dogs of Hereros," and the Damaras were bullied indiscriminately by both sides, while freebooter Orlams and Bastards, like the Witboois and the Afrikaner clan, brought their rifles into the fray. Cattle, land and women were the prizes, and

people died like flies from war, pestilence and drought.

Even the German occupation was little more than a prolonged war from 1893 to 1908, by which time the Germans had spent £30,000,000 in money on the campaigns and lost the lives of over 2,000 officers and men, while the Herero people had been reduced from 100,000 to 20,000, the Hottentots had lost about 5,000, and the Damaras had had their numbers halved.

Stormy history, and yet to-day the land over which those armies fought is called in political circles—"A land fit only for Bushmen and baboons."

Strange people, the Hottentots. If they worship anything in particular it is the moon, although they profess to believe in a good God, "Tik-guaa," and a particular devil whom they call "Gauna." But where civilization has not made them self-conscious about their old customs and beliefs, they have special songs and dances, with which they welcome the new moon.

Their laws are also peculiar to themselves among all the people of Africa. Among many native African races murder is not considered a crime to warrant a severe penalty. In fact, little distinction is made in most tribal laws between murder and accidental death. Among the Zulus, for instance, the penalty was seven cattle for killing a man, or ten for killing a woman. (A woman is naturally valued more highly, as the prospective mother of many men, except in time of war.) Sometimes, however, if the chief felt greedy, or the deceased was a particular friend of his, all the murderer's property was confiscated, fines being payable to the chief.

But the Hottentots used to stone murderers to death. They burned all women taken in adultery, but this was not so unusual, for in Chaka's day the Zulus also considered this a crime punishable by death, although men seldom paid the penalty.

The Hottentots have their own story about death, although most African natives are true Positivists in their attitude to Metaphysics. They live for the moment in a truly extraordinary way. They grab greedily at any pleasures that life brings them, enjoying it thriftlessly, with no thought as to whence it came or how long it will last, and they meet disaster in much the same fashion; but they will never give a thought in advance to impending trouble. It does not exist for them until they are in the thick of it.

They seldom seem to repine, or to look about for someone to blame, but wait stoically for what is to come next, and, meantime, make the most of what they have got. I know of no people who grieve less than the uncivilized races of Africa. The African in his native state neither blesses the sunshine, nor curses the rain, but goes out in the former, and stays home by his fire as much as possible during the latter. He is an expert at doing nothing, sitting either in the sunshine or by a fire, and, really, if he has a philosophy it must be that the less he does the less likely he is to interfere with the plans that Good Fortune may have made for him.

I also believe that, as he comes under the control of the white man, he adds to this philosophy the rider—what are these white men for, if it is not to rally round and accept all responsibility—feed the starving, provide for the poverty-stricken, sink

wells, build dams, be father, mother, doctor, and friend—at times of stress?

But to return to that Hottentot story about death. Although all natives dislike even thinking about it, or about what comes after it, each race has its queer fable. This is the Hottentot version.

The moon wanted to send a message to man to tell him that he must not fear death because there was a new life beyond it. Looking around for a messenger, the moon saw the hare and, because of its fleetness of foot, selected it for the task.

"Tell man," said the moon, "that as I die and dying am born again, so shall he die and dying live again."

The hare got confused on the way (some versions even have it that he got drunk), with the result that he added a "not" to the message, telling man—"As I die and dying am born again, so shall you die and *not* be born again!"

So man learnt to fear death, and the moon could never persuade them that it was all a mistake. The moon was so annoyed about this that it took up a stick and beat the hare, splitting its lip, with the result that the hare has a split lip to this day.

Heitsi-Eibib is the great mythical hero of the Hottentots, but the stories about him are very confused. The favourite concerns his birth. A young girl was eating honey (a favourite Hottentot delicacy) when suddenly she became pregnant and brought forth a bull. This so horrified her people that they chased the animal to kill it, but when they came upon it, it changed into an old man. They asked where the bull had gone, and he replied that he did not know, but this was untrue, for the old man was none other than Heitsi-Eibib,

born so dramatically of the unfortunate maiden, who could change his shape and age at will.

It was Heitsi-Eibib who put an end to flying lions. All lions used to fly like birds, say the Hottentots, and Heitsi-Eibib found one which had swooped down upon an ox, like an eagle on a sheep. The ox was heavy and the lion too greedy to let go, so the hero crept up and cut off the lion's wings.

Strange people, the Hottentots. In the past, great dreamers and weavers of tales, great hunters and warriors, probably the first native in Southern Africa to come in touch with white settlers, who named them "The Quackers," from the Low German word *Hutten-tut*, to quack, because their talk resembled the cackling of geese! To see them as they are to-day, one realizes that something has gone seriously wrong somewhere with the scheme of things. Civilization is understood to uplift a people. The Hottentots have come up against it, and only the future can show whether their present state is only a transitory downward trend on the way up.

II

When, in 1890, Germany stepped in, after much shilly-shallying by the Cape Government, and annexed South-West Africa, the whole of the territory south of what is now Windhoek was occupied by Hottentot tribes who had lived and ruled there for the past five hundred years. In the midst of this territory, like an island, was the Gebeit claimed by the Rehoboth Bastards, who

actually only rented it at that time from the powerful Hottentot chiefs. The Hottentots were the kings of all they surveyed, their only rivals being the Hereros, whom they sought to subject.

They, however, were divided into two distinct classes : The Namas, the more simple, " native " Hottentots, who had not come into contact with white men and half-breeds at the Cape, and who retained the religion, customs, weapons and traditions of an uncivilized people ; and the Orlams, who had come from the Cape, where they had long been closely associated with the whites. These Orlams nearly all professed Christianity ; they spoke Cape Dutch as well as their native language ; they rode horses and used guns ; and their customs and laws had a strong European base, for they were largely borrowed from the white settlers. It was from this group of the Hottentots that there sprang the great brigand chieftains of the bad old days.

They soon forced their more backward brethren into a state of subjection under them, after much internecine warfare of the bandit raid variety ; then they turned on one another. The Afrikaners, led by the Jager I have already mentioned, and later his son, Jonker, were at first the ruling clan. But then the Witboois rose to power, and in the eighties of last century the proud Afrikaners were brought low and subjugated, and Hendrik Witbooi, one of the most interesting characters in African history, set himself up as Paramount Chief of Great Namaqualand.

The term applied to Rhodes when viewing his memorial—" the dreamer and doer "—as aptly fits Hendrik Witbooi, the great chief of the Hottentots. He was that rare combination : thinker and man

of action. There was a strange blend of forcefulness and mysticism in his character, a deeply religious strain woven into the normal texture of a filibuster.

His power was absolute, for he was a firm believer in the Divine Right of Kings. He was supposed to rule through an elected council, but no councillor dared gainsay him. Here is a sample of one of his proclamations :

Hornkranz,
3rd January, 1891.

Beloved community of Hornkranz,

To-day I make fresh appointments for the New Year. I have caused certain alterations to be made in the Civil and Church laws. I have also appointed new officials according to the times and the promptings of the Lord. Therefore, have I appointed younger men, like children who are being trained, and when the time is accomplished they will be taken into full membership. For this reason I have relieved some of the older officials and have substituted younger men in full authority of the laws, in order that they may publicly perform their authorized duties. I have, however, re-appointed some of the old officials as well, so that they may train and teach the young span. I have also appointed two additional Elders. The names of those appointed will be read to the community, and are as follows. . . ."

The list of names given includes such high-sounding, but unpaid, offices as—"Magistrate," "War Commandant," "Chief Field Cornet" and "Messengers of the Council." In this "light opera," almost "Gilbertian," style Hendrik

Witbooi was ruling, and the other chiefs under him, when the Germans came.

The majority of the Hottentot tribes refused to acknowledge the suzerainty of Germany. At the time of the annexation they were indulging in one of their periodical (in fact, well nigh incessant) wars with the Hereros, and only a few tribes, which were not under Witboois control, signed agreements to accept German protection.

Moses Witbooi, the father of Hendrik, was presented with one of these agreements by a missionary as early as 1886 (before the official annexation), and old Moses was so furious that he closed the mission church forthwith and would not permit another service to be held there. Henceforth, and until the death of the son, Hendrik, the Witbooi chief was his own priest.

Hendrik was equally firm in his refusal to have anything to do with German protection. He ignored a threatening letter from Dr. Goering, the German "Controller"; so finally von Francois, the Administrator, was goaded by the indignant Hereros (who had signed protection agreements) into bearding the Witbooi lion in his den. He was received courteously, but little came of their talk, except the realization for Witbooi that he, the Paramount Chief of Namaqualand, was a German subject! He had not appreciated this fact before, and could scarcely comprehend that, with the consent of England, his country had been taken possession of by the Germans.

He made peace with the Hereros, and then turned his attention to this new, major problem. He wrote a long letter to the "English Magistrate" at Walvis Bay, in which he utters a striking indictment of German procedure, and begs the

magistrate to "let all the great men of England know of it, so that they may . . . consider this position of the Germans and if possible call these people back. Because they are not following the Agreements and Resolutions on the strength of which you let them enter the land. . . ."

He then waited to see what would happen next. He had not long to wait. Early in 1893, (according to Leutwein, a German commentator on events, who was later governor of the Territory), von Francois received :

"The simple instruction to uphold German domination under all circumstances. It was left by him to do so either by means of attack or defence. The Commissioner decided, after weighing all the circumstances, to give one of the native races an impression of our power. He considered that the Witboois would be suitable for our purpose. . . . The humiliation of the Witboois would exercise the greatest influence on the others. . . ."

"Under preservation of the greatest secrecy," Leutwein writes later, "the troops on the morning of 12th April, 1893, attacked Hornkranz, the location of Witbooi. The chief apparently reckoned on a formal declaration of war, and was completely taken by surprise ; he was peacefully drinking his morning coffee. Yet he succeeded, by judicious flight, in saving himself and all his fighting men. . . ."

Witbooi hid himself in the almost impregnable fastnesses of the Naauwkloof Mountains, where he defied all efforts to crush him. He was then more than seventy years old, but he clung tenaciously to his belief that it was best for his people to maintain their independence. He held out

until the end of August, 1894, when a large German force, complete with modern artillery, attacked his stronghold. Still old Witbooi and his men fought on, even after their ammunition was exhausted and their food had long been reduced to a diet of wild roots, mice, lizard and ants.

Then, at last, on the 15th September, 1894, the Lion of the Hottentots was forced to surrender, if only for the sake of his men.

"They were famished," writes Leutwein, "and their condition was pitiful."

So, at last, Hendrik Witbooi signed the Protection Agreement, acknowledging the control of Germany, to which he remained true for almost twelve years. He led his warriors many times during that interval, fighting for the Germans against the other tribes, but when the Hereros were goaded into rebellion, the Hottentots at last rose again against the Germans, and finally—although eighty years of age—Hendrik Witbooi died as he undoubtedly preferred, leading his men into battle against the Germans near Tses in October, 1906.

So passed out of African history an extraordinary man. His people will never forget him. The stories of his exploits are legion, and rank with epics of courage which have been broadcast round the world, for—with all his faults as a brigand—Hendrik Witbooi was of the stuff from which the great names of history are made.

I heard other stories, disinterred from the depths of native memories, stories which at that stage of my journey I could scarcely credit, concerning as they did the activities of a civilized power "colonizing" a backward country. I found it hard to sift the truth from the gall, but here are



Photo by Exclusive News Agency

HOTTENTOT WOMEN BEFORE THEIR HOME

two signed statements, sworn before magistrates when the British occupied the Territory in 1915. I quote them because they are parallel to stories which were told to me, but which lack substantiation.

Benjamin Burger (a Dutch South African) stated on oath :

" In 1904 I was living on the farm Rietkuil, in the Gibeon district. I served as a guide to the German troops . . . when the Germans were fighting the Witboois under Hendrik Witbooi. I accompanied the troops from Gibeon to Koses on the Norop River. We had a fight that morning and took the Hottentot camp. The commanding officer gave orders to search for natives along the river-bed near the camp. We found thirteen women and old men in a cave. . . . As they came out of the cave each native was shot dead. This was done to avoid the trouble of escorting them to Gibeon. . . . That same day a German soldier raped a young native girl about sixteen to eighteen years of age. I came upon him in the veld. After he had raped her he stuck his bayonet through her stomach and then shot her. . . ."

Willem Christian (a Hottentot) stated on oath :

" Before the rebellion many of our people died in gaol owing to insufficient food, ill-treatment and flogging.

" A white man could do as he pleased to us. White men were not punished. Our word was never taken in court. If we complained we were not believed. Any number of us could give the same evidence, but it carried no weight. We were not allowed to give evidence on oath. On the other hand, a white man was always believed and his evidence was always accepted. . . . If any

of our people were arrested on a farm by the German police, a rope was tied round his neck and it was held in the hand of the mounted policeman, alongside of whose horse the prisoner had to trot all the way. If he tired or lagged back, he was flogged and hit and made to go on. . . ."

But I should like to close this brief review of Hottentot history from the time of the German occupation, by quoting Leutwein again. The German governor, as he was then, wrote of old Hendrik Witbooi words which make a fitting epitaph :

"The little Chief had, however, immortalized his name in the history of the South-West African Protectorate. First his obstinate resistance of the mighty power of the German Empire, at the head of a small band of warlike but nevertheless tired and impoverished people ; then his loyal support of our cause for ten years ; and, eventually, the change and the rebellion—these have bound his name inseparably with the history of the country. To me he is still the little Chief who so loyally stood by my side for ten long years. . . . He was the last hero of a dying race. . . .

"A born leader and ruler, that Witbooi was ; a man who probably might have become world-famous had it not been his fate to be born to a small African throne."

III

Near Kalkfontein I saw the mail train, and I met it again at Keetmanshoep, about a hundred

and forty miles up-country. This was quite unexpected, but I was reminded of the Man of Destiny and Old Faithful, for the train had broken down.

Night had fallen and a number of men were gathered around with lamps, trying to stop the water supply escaping through a leaking valve under the dining-car. After various volunteers had grovelled under the train and only contrived to make a larger stream flow than before, a shout was raised for the plumber, who had gone home and taken his tools with him.

He seemed to be about the only member of the town's population who was not on the platform, and when I first saw the crowd I thought for a moment that I was witnessing a mass migration. I had heard Keetmanshoep described as one of the driest places in South-West Africa, and I thought the citizens had decided to abandon it *en masse*. But the meeting of the train is a favourite recreation in South African dorps, and this time the folk had the added entertainment of watching the antics of the amateur plumbers and cracking private jokes.

Everybody was very gay. Women in pretty frocks, many children scampering about in the throng up to mischief of their own. All were good advertisements for the healthiness of the climate, and throughout my trip I was struck by the general standard of good health and physical fitness among the whites, comparable to that in any district in South Africa and infinitely higher than the majority in East Africa and those parts of West Africa which I travelled through in 1932-33.

Perhaps the other most noticeable thing about that cheery crowd on the platform at Keetmans-

hoep was the prevalence of the German language. Drifting around as unobtrusively as possible—for most of the men wore trousers with creases in a different place to the astounding variety on my soiled and shabby shorts ; shirts were clean, and collars and ties in evidence—I decided that out of every ten white people there, five spoke German, three Afrikaans, and only two English. The natives in white employ that I came in contact with knew quite a bit of German, some Afrikaans and practically no English ; the same holding good of such natives in the reserves as knew any language beyond their own.

The enforced delay of the train enabled me to slip into the dining-car and snatch some refreshment, for the trains and the railway refreshment-rooms in South Africa provide some of the best food obtainable. This is understandable in outlying districts, across which the train naturally carries delicacies that the settlers can obtain nowhere else, but in both Joh'berg and Capetown I am not doing anything extraordinary if I chose the station restaurant for a lunch-party, for there is not an hotel which can better the service and the food.

I am an old hand at boarding trains for refreshments, as during those orange-growing days of mine we developed the habit of boarding the mail train at one siding and eating and drinking rapidly until we left it at the next, having previously arranged for our horses to be taken to meet us. I must admit that the horses were occasionally needed to deliver us safely home, and on one occasion I met an itinerant dentist and forgot to get down at the siding. The result was that I missed the horses, and the dentist and I were

found fast asleep, with our heads pillowed on the railway track, up the line. Fortunately, more than one train a day was exceptional, or my African experiences would have ended then.

Beyond Keetsmanhoep, west of the railway, and in the heart of the Berseba native reserve—more Hottentots—is the extinct volcano of Mount Brukkaros, within the crater of which the Smithsonian Institute of Washington, U.S.A., carried out delicate research work for a number of years.

Two of their astronomers, F. Greely and W. Hoover, exiled themselves in the crater of that old volcano, in the attempt to predict the weather conditions of the world from a study of the variation in the sun's radiation.

Before they settled upon Mount Brukkaros they examined sites in places as far afield as Algeria, Egypt and Baluchistan, and the Director of the Institute, Dr. C. C. Abbott, travelled 30,000 miles in his search for the ideal spot. Baluchistan was a strong favourite, but the tribesmen in the area were not sympathetic. Bandits almost to a man, they caused Dr. Abbott to decide that an obscure mountain in South-West Africa would be healthier than that wild corner of Asia.

The research station was closed down several years ago, but whenever I hear the radio announcer say "Weather forecast," my mind turns to that great, isolated mountain, with the miles of desolation all around it.

Days slipped by almost monotonously, although not one could exactly resemble its predecessor. The first streak of grey light generally found me awake. I had ceased troubling to pitch the tent, for nights were distinctly chilly and I missed the blankets I had had to jettison. So I formed

the habit of wrapping myself in the folds of the tent. The morning air was always cold, even the eternal sand sparkling with beads of dew, so I was never tempted to delay getting started.

Generally I made myself a hot drink and had a bite of food, then bundled the goods on to Sir Walter. Stamping out my fire, and having a last look round to make sure I had not left something behind, I would eventually get started, and I always blessed the pair of home-knitted mittens that were a parting present before I left England.

Those early morning rides were unforgettable experiences. The air was like wine and for quite a time retained sufficient chill to it to give a tingle to the blood. Sir Walter never seemed so heavy and cantankerous as he had been the night before. I seemed to fall off less often. Every atom of the charm which this strange land undoubtedly possesses was on show. Birds announced the joy they found in living and the natives I passed had wide morning smiles. Faint mists usually shrouded the distant hills, gradually clearing as the sun rose.

The heat would work up by degrees, until I began to experience the sensation which always makes me think of someone ironing my shirt with me in it. The sweat began to form and drip down towards the handle-bars from my face, the rest streaming down me in tickling trickles. Joy of life began to wane; Sir Walter to make his weight and eccentricities felt. My lips would dry out and my mouth and throat begin to feel as though shrivelling up. I would begin to say things to Sir Walter and myself which were neither polite nor kindly. The day's trek had properly begun.

After two or three hours riding I would stop for breakfast—a snack of food and a drink, then a period flat on my back in whatever shade I could find, with pipe or cigarette and my thoughts. Sometimes I dozed off, and the brief breakfast halt allowed for in my schedule would expand in an elastic fashion, but usually I got away again within the hour.

Sometimes if guinea-fowl betrayed their presence or something else caught my attention, I would scarcely rest at all. Instead, the catapult would come into play, or I would be moved to climb a nearby kopje and survey the surrounding country.

On other occasions, of course, I arrived somewhere, and the break was taken in company with some local inhabitant, white or coloured, who generally welcomed the excuse to do nothing but sit and talk. Then we would discuss droughts and water supplies, sheep and goats, cattle and crops, distances to and from places, the price of living, the prospects of South-West Africa, its present and its past.

I detected a distinct bitterness against the Germans in the minds of many of the natives, particularly Hottentots who hold that land which is rightly theirs was taken from them during the German occupation. Also some shocking memories were revived of those days when individual Germans, if not the administration, treated native workers with almost unexcelled harshness. Although as I went on my way I marvelled at the snug little towns the Germans built, the solid creature comforts they contrived to import, the Teutonic thoroughness with which they set out to tame sections of the wilderness, I also heard

old tales of methods of colonization which defy description.

During the early stages of the trek I simply stored these away in my mind, seeking more substantial proof than the memories of bitter men.¹

Towards noon I would make another halt, longer this time. More food, another period of contented laziness ; then on again until the sun dropped low towards the hills. The last miles of the day were always a period of torture. Sir Walter regularly became almost unmanageable, and every mile I would be looking for a suitable site to camp. As always seems to be the case, I invariably passed ideal spots in the morning, but had to make the best of the least of many disadvantages in the evening. At last, rather than make camp after darkness had fallen—a brute of a business, during which everything gets in the wrong place and one falls over most of them, while one expects to find (and quite often expectations are more than fulfilled) snakes, scorpions, or other malevolent intruders concealed under every object one feels for in the darkness—I would prop Sir Walter up with a forked stick that I carried for the purpose and then off-load. So another day would come to an end, with a varying number of miles and new experiences to my credit.

When I could find enough water I washed ; when a mouthful of drink was the limit I could spare until I found the next supply, I generally managed some sort of a sponge down in the early days of the trip, through the habit I formed of leaving a rubber sponge out to collect dew. This I would carefully pack away in the morning in a

¹ Appendix B. Page 313.

waterproof sponge-bag, so that it was not always absolutely as dry as a bone by evening. Unfortunately, some night prowler took a fancy to the sponge, for it disappeared. I hope the brute swallowed it and, as a result, has never been able to appease his thirst !

An old-timer once told me that, when travelling in deserts, his method of "bathing" was to run until he sweated, then strip, and go through the procedure of bathing with sand instead of water. I only tried this once. Perhaps it did clean and refresh the skin, as he claimed, but lord how I itched and how grey I looked for days afterwards !

The loss of my sponge reminded me of an occasion when I tried to be swagger on trek. A kind relative in England had sent me an elegant silk dressing-gown, rich red in colour, with dragons and things rampant across the back. At the time, however, I had no home in the accepted sense, for I was transport-riding for a land company. My job was to travel regularly between the company's estate and the distant rail-head with a waggon drawn by sixteen mules. I slept under the waggon, and because I had been reading a book by a woman novelist, in which the hero remained immaculate in most trying circumstances at the back o' beyond (changing for dinner every night) I took my dressing-gown along with me. When I turned in I hung it on the side of the waggon. The next morning I found that the mules had eaten both sleeves !

IV

Not far from Keetmanshoep is Seeheim, which claims to be on the left bank of the Fish River. That, however, does not mean that the people there have a lido and mixed bathing, for at most times of most years the river is nothing but a wide channel of deeper sand than elsewhere.

Seeheim's only claim to importance is that it is the junction of the railway which runs through the sterile country to the port of Luderitz, and at first sight this is nothing to be particularly proud about. When the railway was being linked between Upington and Kalkfontein, during the war, the Union authorities seriously considered taking up the rails of the Seeheim-Luderitz branch and using them elsewhere. This would have isolated Luderitz, but the country traversed is so arid and wild, and the sand invades the railway with such persistent, all-enveloping regularity, that the effort of continuously digging down to find what had become of the rails seemed more than the branch-line was worth.

But Luderitz is the centre of what the romantic call "the Diamond Coast." From Angola to south of the Orange River runs a stretch of real desert, sixty to a hundred miles wide, absolutely sterile, with no vegetation whatsoever, a ghastly land of grotesque, ever-shifting sand-dunes, where the traveller feels like some small frustrated ant trying to climb out of a wide salt-cellar.

It is this strip which has caused travellers by sea to spread the report that South-West Africa is an arid desert, for all they see around Luderitz

or Walvis Bay (the two ports) is mile upon mile of these sand-dunes, forming queer valleys and mountains, which are frequently shrouded in clammy, depressing sea mists. The Bushmen are the only natives who even try to eke out an existence in those wastes, and the Bushman in this respect is the nearest thing to a human goat that I have yet encountered. He can find sufficient food to keep his soul in his wiry little body in places which seem to offer less sustenance than a vulture leaves on a carcass.

But white folk live in this area nowadays, because of the wealth hidden in the sand. Spread down the sterile coast are diamond-washing plants, supplied with water and power by cables and pipe-lines from Luderitz. Formerly the port had to depend upon supplies of water brought by train from far inland, but now sea water is condensed and relayed far afield to the mines.

An electric railway links up this area, the only thing of its kind in South-West Africa. Vast mechanical scrapers scoop up the sand in the desert camps, loading into trucks, which rush it through to the washing plant. Eventually all these efforts result in small quantities of selected grit collected in small hand-sieves, out of which trained natives pick the diamonds.

The Sperregebiet, as this area is now called, is forbidden territory. Lynx-eyed guards watch for the illicit diamond traders; traps are set; whole areas are surrounded with barbed wire and patrolled; for the output must be regulated with meticulous care to preserve the balance of the market. Suspicion is rife. On the one hand shrewd men are seeking a way of outwitting equally

smart authorities ; on the other, the authorities are evolving new methods of thinking a whole move ahead of their opponents ; and in between friend suspects friend of being a spy.

The I.D.B. merchants have proved the cleverer upon occasion, and many stories go the rounds. One, told of the early days, describes the funeral of a man who died. His relations, prompted by certain interests, begged to have the body forwarded to them for decent burial in the old churchyard at home. So a fine coffin was imported and a solemn cortège attended it on its return journey through the guarded area to the train. But the deceased actually occupied a rough grave in the rich wastes responsible for his fate, and one of the richest hauls made in the chequered history of I.D.B. was escorted respectfully from the diggings by the authorities themselves, for the coffin contained a carefully weighed quantity of diamonds and sand.

Then there is the story of the man with the twin cars. This quick-thinking twister allowed himself to be caught and searched in Namaqualand in his fast, distinctive car. After a most comprehensive examination of himself and his machine he was regretfully allowed to go on his way. He threatened proceedings for unlawful detention, but nothing ever came of them, for he had got away with a parcel of stones by the simple process of changing into another identical car. He reasoned correctly that the authorities were not likely to stop the same car twice.

How much truth there is in these particular stories I cannot say, but I heard them repeated many times, together with countless others, and there is no doubt that occasionally geniuses succeed

in smuggling through stones to illicit buyers far beyond that region of sand and desolation.

Luderitz has a well-sheltered harbour with good anchorage, but is of little importance beyond its connection with the diamond mines, although crayfish canning factories have been opened there, and there will be men who remember it as the prelude to the intolerable thirst-stricken march across the Namib desert to join the main army at Seeheim in 1915.

V

As I went on my way northwards towards Rehoboth, the headquarters of the Bastards, I found that the belief that any white man must be a medical adviser and purveyor of pills was as prevalent here as anywhere in Africa. When one comes across any simple native community the sick are always paraded. This man has a pain in his stomach which has troubled him for many days and nights, while his wife has sundry intimate ailments, described with gusto before an audience. Somebody has a sore foot, somebody else vague pains he is not sure where. Many of the ailments are probably imaginary, excuses to gobble the white man's pills and potions, but the average white man feels it's his duty to look very wise, to listen to long-winded, vividly descriptive catalogues of symptoms, nodding his head and saying a sage "Ha!" at appropriate intervals.

Finally, he prescribes, and then goes on his way, hoping for the best.

I may be speaking rank heresy from a medical point of view, but I have brought off some startling cures with my five stand-bys of calomel, epsom salts, aspirin, quinine and iodine. Faith does the rest ! I remember a farm-boy in South Africa writhing with pain once, and so genuinely bad that I thought I should have to move him to hospital. Transport was difficult owing to exceptional rains in the hills having swollen two small spruits into raging torrents, converting the farm into an island, so I gave the boy a couple of aspirins and some epsom salts, while I went home to refer to a medical book and decide what to do next. With the doses I gave him a lecture on their infallibility. He was back at work the next morning.

I have always believed that one of the attractions of Africa is that to the unspoilt native the white man stands for something big. He is expected to be doctor, friend and legal adviser. When whole villages bring their problems—legal, medical and personal—to one man simply because his skin is white, it makes a man proud of his birthright and gives a fine feeling of being independently worthwhile to one who has simply been “one of the crowd” in the welter of civilization. That may sound conceited, but it does nobody harm to feel that he is somebody after all, for he feels also that he must live up to the honour. Perhaps that is the real secret of the lure that calls men from civilization back to the wilds. They want to be something more than puppets, to have to be dependent on their own skill and nerve for what they get. In civilization experts are within call to do everything for a man, from preparing his food to advising on his every action ; in the wilds he is an expert, the whole pack of them rolled into

one, not only to attend to his own wants, but those of the simple folk who accept his verdicts and prescriptions with such implicit faith because of the colour of his skin.

The white man in Africa inherits a great heritage, something big to live up to, for some of the men who gave their lives to Africa in the past set so high a standard that the natives base their judgment of the whites on the man, whose help and unswerving justice meant so much to them, and forget the hundred twisters, renegades and sadists who were a disgrace to any race. There have been men who placed all their experience and the wisdom of civilization at the free disposal of the natives, with the result that those same natives now look to every white man to do the same, and trust him implicitly, until he betrays that trust, which he does too often, but still it is the exception that these strange people use as a gauge for the rest.

But my medicines have not always proved welcome. I remember a certain very raw native who eyed the dose of epsoms I held out to him, and then looked across at a sjambok which chanced to be near at hand.

"Baas, it would be better if you beat me!" he decided.

CHAPTER VII

STRANGE ROADS, A TWENTIETH CENTURY TREK-BOER, AND MANY ENCOUNTERS

I

I WAS picking Sir Walter and myself up off the road when I first met that romantic figure, the Trek-Boer—a Voortrekker who might have stepped out of the pages of African history.

I had spent the previous night in a comfortable bed in a little homestead literally miles from anywhere, and the occasion had been notable for an absurd little bit of bluff. I had not intended to do more than ask for some water and, maybe, have a bit of a chat before going on my way, for I reached that homestead quite early in the afternoon.

But an Englishwoman came on to the verandah when I had propped up Sir Walter and ventured towards the door. Actually the term woman does not describe her in the least, for she was very young and, it seemed to me, rather scared.

She called back to some invisible being inside the house something about—"a visitor, Harry!" And then I began to explain my presence. To my surprise she laughed.

I must have stared at her and probably looked annoyed, but that only made her laugh all the more. I knew I looked somewhat battered and

dishevelled, but I was also tired, thirsty and more than a little warm.

I began to tell her that I supposed it was funny to see a man ride up on a bicycle overloaded with his worldly goods, but I had a long way to go before evening and only wanted to fill my water-bags—— And all the time I could hear a man talking in the room just on the other side of the door. He seemed to be talking to himself. I began to wonder if I had stumbled upon some tragedy of loneliness—people, unaccustomed to isolation, driven out of their minds by it.

But the girl managed to control her laughter, although she still had difficulty to repress it, as she apologized and reached for my sleeve. She led me to the door.

“I am so sorry,” she explained, “but I’m new to all this—not been out from home long, and—well, afraid of tramps and—and all that—so I brought this along with me specially——”

Then I laughed. For I saw that there was a gramophone on the table just inside the door. Little Mrs. Settler had turned it on when she saw me approaching the house, and the record was one of His late Majesty King George the Fifth’s Christmas day Messages to the Empire.

“I wanted you to think there was a man in the house!” she explained.

Apparently my voice was not so bad as my appearance, for she said that she knew I was all right as soon as I spoke.

“And when you became all stiff and haughty because I laughed at you—so absolutely English—well, that made me laugh all the more!” she confessed.

She had cakes in the oven in a cosy, very

English kitchen, so I shed my trappings and supervised baking operations (with judicious tests of results at intervals) until the return of Harry. Then all thought of trekking on was forgotten until the morning. I slept in pyjamas that night (lent to me by my host), and there was a shelf of books by the bed, bright curtains at the window, a runner, or whatever the absurd thing is called, on the home-made dressing-table (an astounding erection made of petrol boxes covered with cretonne with smaller boxes inserted as drawers), and there were photographs of very English people in stiff, very English attitudes, decorating the walls. I knew without being told that Father, Mother, Uncle This, Aunt That, were all there.

It is a trite statement that folk can be judged by the books on their shelves. I found myself with the choice of *Patty and Priscilla*, *The Works of Wordsworth* (a school prize), *Light of Western Stars*, two Edgar Wallaces, an omnibus volume of *Tales of Romance*, *When We Were Very Young*, and *The Sheik*. And I sat up in bed until almost daylight, smoking pipe after pipe and dipping into one book after the other.

But first I enjoyed a friendly, almost hilarious supper with my host and hostess, although the guilty feeling was at the back of my mind that my visit might put them on short rations the next day. For I remembered too vividly occasions when unexpected visitors—the police trooper on patrol, or some such nomad—made it necessary for my wife and I to lay false claim to very small appetites, or even, on extreme occasions, to insist that we had already had an exceptionally early meal and could not “manage even another bite!” For stores have a habit of running short in places

far from the nearest source of supply, and some unlooked-for guest, complete with the sort of appetite that a man cultivates on trek, upsets all calculations and leads to a period of short commons. That is one of the inner meanings of the term Colonial Hospitality !

My host was much older than his wife and South African born. He had farmed in the Free State before the war, but the peculiar lure of South-West took hold on him during that swift, but most uncomfortable of campaigns. A visit to Europe to spend a legacy had led to his marriage to an English girl, whom he had scooped from the happy, crowded atmosphere of a large family in a Midland industrial town and transported to her present depressing, desolate surroundings. Their nearest neighbour was a matter of ten miles away, and he was a Dutchman who did not speak English, but they professed to make a joke of their lonely life.

I did not talk politics with them, nor did I ask any of my questions. Little Mrs. Settler was too starved for absurd little items of news about home : talk of films ; and " have you ever been to Blackpool ? "—" or Birmingham—Brighton—this or that place in London ? " " I miss my daily paper more than anything. Is the *Nipper* still in the *Mail* ?—Is he as funny as ever ? "

Simple stuff, but meat and drink to her. Imagine what it would feel like to be taken from all the bustle and noise of familiar surroundings in the typical English town, with policemen always within call, lighted shops, the ever-present hum of traffic, and planted down in a wide, arid wilderness, all strange and intolerably lonely, surrounded by a silence such as the town-bred can never know

—heavy silence, like something tangible, which seems to close round on all sides. No popping round the corner to see Mrs. This, or passing the time “shop-window gazing.” No butcher’s boy calling for orders; no butcher’s shop to visit!

I believe nine women out of ten would become weepy and hard to live with during the period when adapting themselves to their new surroundings and learning their Africa, but that Mrs. Settler was one of the tenth.

It was several miles beyond the home of these pleasant people that I met my Trek-Boer. A cloud of dust in the distance materialized into a long waggon drawn by a team of diminutive grey donkeys. This unwieldy conveyance was filling the so-called road, and, in trying to pass it, Sir Walter slithered into a thick expanse of sand, with the result that I hit the ground alongside the donkeys.

A voice bellowed at the donkeys, and then an immensely tall old man, with sharp-pointed white beard, beak of a nose, and red-rimmed brown eyes, appeared and helped me to my feet. He spoke very little English, but he was a friendly old fellow, and we managed to understand each other.

He was astounded at the sight of both myself and my mount, but with the politeness of his kind made little comment on either. Instead, he offered me a lift. So Sir Walter was lifted on to the back of the waggon and I climbed up beside the old man.

He proved to be an Angola Boer. As a very small child he had been one of a party of Trek-Boers which passed through this country in the eighteen-seventies, seeking as ever for new homes beyond the skyline. They had originally tried to

get through north of Gobabis, on the fringe of the Kalahari desert, but the Hottentots and Hereros had combined against them, so they circled round and managed to find a way through in the far north.

Their supplies ran out and they were without water, but still they pushed on, another epic of the astounding Voortrekkers who plunged out into the unknown in their great, unwieldy waggons in the search for new homes. Inspired by Biblical texts they braved fever, drought and natives, in the search for the Promised Land. They were harassed by Bushmen even after they had evaded the Hottentots and Hereros, but eventually reached the northern Kaokoveld between the Etosha Pan and the Kunene River.

Meanwhile, so great was the anxiety felt for their safety in the Cape that ships were sent north to rescue them. Supplies were landed at Walvis Bay, but the Trek-Boers refused to return. They insisted on trekking on in search of that land that was to be their home. They sent for the supplies, however, and admitted that they had been living on venison and zebra meat, and that the way had been hard, but they insisted on crossing the Kunene into the Portuguese colony of Angola.

There they settled at Humpata, high above the sea in the Huilla district, about a hundred miles from the port of Mossamedes, and it seemed that their ambition was achieved, for the high land around there is fertile and reasonably healthy. But soon they began to have difficulties with the Portuguese authorities. The Boers protested that they were granted no educational facilities, and that they could get no title to their lands, while, on the other hand, the Portuguese declared that many of the Boers were ivory poachers and

smugglers, setting at defiance all the game laws of the colony.

So in 1927 a number of families, including my companion on the waggon, trekked south again until they reached the banks of the Kunene once more. From there they sent messages to both the Union Government and the Administration of South-West Africa, asking to be allowed to settle south of the river.

The Union Government provided £524,000 to assist them, of which £80,000 was spent on the trek which brought 300 families, comprising almost 2000 people, south and settled them on land in South-West Africa. Every family was promised a farm and that promise was kept. Some say that it was detrimental to other settlers and the welfare of the Territory as a whole, for many families were not accustomed to farming and were not capable of making a success of the venture in the peculiar climate of their new home.

The long drought hit them severely, while epidemics of cattle disease made matters worse, but the Administration continues to nurse them assiduously, with the result that conditions are improving. Although many—including my companion—protest that their land in Angola was far superior, it would seem that their wandering is ended at last. They are settling down and, with the aid of the Administration, backed by the Union Government, their future should be assured, but what will become of them if German hopes materialize and South-West Africa is returned to the Reich? Germany wants colonies for her own people. Are they going to be willing, or able, to spend thousands of pounds annually to nurse unfortunates of an alien race?

And a nurse is what for many years the Administration of South-West Africa must be. This fact was brought home regularly to me as I passed through the territory. The natives need continual assistance of every kind ; a considerable time must pass before the Angola Boers are really self-supporting (and one must not lose sight of the vast sums advanced on their behalf by the Union Government ; the Union can scarcely be expected to view that as a philanthropic gesture) ; and, owing to the peculiar nature of most of the land, farming operations cannot be carried out successfully without considerably more capital than would ensure success elsewhere. Many settlers have not started with sufficient capital, and so have had to be subsidised, which state of affairs will have to continue, whatever Administration is permanently established in the future.

I had already begun to realize that the territory is capable of great expansion. The nucleus of a self-supporting colony is there. Farming can be made to pay—my companion had done quite well with karakul sheep, and knew men who had attained prosperity with these providers of “ persian lamb ” coats—also the mineral resources have scarcely been tapped. Besides diamonds, copper, gold, tin and vanadium, have already been found in payable quantities, but in the days of the German occupation the opening up of mineral areas was hindered by trouble with the natives, and since the territory was mandated to the Union, the uncertainty of its future, coupled with the world depression, has made people shy of investing capital, which, as with the development of farming, must be large because of the nature of this ostensibly desolate country.

II

North of Mariental the country changes its appearance considerably. Scattered trees begin to dot the landscape, still small and insignificant, but giving a more diversified look to the general surroundings. These are interspersed with stunted bush, while the soil is still sandy but reddish in colour. With sufficient moisture it would be fine, arable land, but deep wells still have to be sunk on all farms.

As one enters the Rehoboth district, however, there is still another change for the better, for this is the finest stretch of land in the territory. Great camelthorn trees put in an appearance. I found the grass thicker and more consistent, not in isolated clumps which look as though they have grown there by mistake and are dying again just as quickly as they can. The country began to assume almost a park-like appearance, but such roads as there were still comprised patches of thick, loose sand, so that progress was as uncertain and hazardous as ever.

It was in this area that Sir Walter had the first of a series of almost precisely similar encounters. A buck which I had no time to identify—I can only say that it was a moderate-sized antelope which moved like the wind—suddenly appeared. I had my nose close to the handlebars, for I was slogging up an incline, so the first thing I saw was a dun-coloured mass moving in my direction.

I swerved and tried to dismount in a hurry, but my foot struck the kettle. The handlebars turned in my grasp and Sir Walter subsided in his usual

ungraceful fashion, with me mixed up in the ruins. I instinctively guarded my head, for I have seen what a buck's sharp little hooves can do to a dog, but he made no mistake about his leap. He cleared the heap and disappeared in a swirl of dust.

I picked myself up, straightened Sir Walter, said harsh things to the kettle, and continued my journey with a few more cuts and bruises, but that leap was quite a stupendous effort. The startled buck must have *flown* very nearly thirty feet through the air and cleared my head with several feet to spare.

It reminded me of a favourite East African story told about a police trooper on patrol who met a lion. The lion sprang at the man but misjudged the distance, jumping completely over him, with the result that the trooper managed to get away. The next day another traveller in the same district found a big lion assiduously practising short leaps over a measured distance !

That buck, as I have said, started a sequence. Startled animals bobbed up at intervals and generally seemed to run towards me in their panic, but one of the most ridiculous encounters was with an ostrich north of Usakos. This large, comic-looking bird either decided to chase me or to prove that he could run faster. He appeared first quite a distance behind me, but when I heard him and looked round he was catching up fast, moving like the wind. I will admit that I was scared. I put my head down and pedalled like fury, but he swept past in the same disdainful fashion as a super-sports car passes a cyclist, leaving behind a legacy of dust.

Occasionally I came upon snakes sunning them-

selves in the road. I always gave them as wide a berth as possible and did not breathe freely until I was well past, for I hate snakes. Every encounter with them only serves to prove how untrue is the old adage about familiarity breeding contempt. People have asked me why I did not run over the snakes—"rather fun, what!"—but at the back of my mind was always the possibility that the snake might twist round, with its usual uncanny agility, and come aboard.

I once ran over a snake with a heavy wagon, and the native with me joined me in a hearty laugh as the wheel did its work; but the next moment we both jumped down into the road, for that snake whipped round, came up the wheel like a streak of fury and squirmed into the back of the wagon. We spent many unpleasant minutes before we could resume our seats.

I have killed, literally, hundreds of snakes while working in orange groves, for the green mamba in particular likes to lie snug in the shade of the foliage, but I have never lost a shrinking hatred of them. The sight of a snake gives me a sickish feeling that I have had to learn to ignore, but have never been able to rid myself of. There is something so loathsome about their coiled lengths of venomous death, and I can appreciate them being taken as the personification of evil.

In Zoos I do not enter the Reptile House, if I can avoid it, perhaps because the imprisoned brutes there remind me too vividly of occasions when I have experienced real fear. I once trod on a snake near my Transvaal home. My booted foot, fortunately, landed immediately behind its head. Most of the body immediately writhed up round my leg. I remained still, wishing for

once that I had more weight to balance on that foot.

In the distance I could see the house, so I shouted for my wife. After an excruciatingly long interval she appeared on the verandah.

"What do you want?" she called.

"A spade!" I shouted.

"A what? I can't hear you?"

"Spade!" I bellowed. "Spade—S-P-A-D-E! SPADE! Thing you dig with! A shovel! You know what I mean—a spade! *Bring a spade!*"

"What for?" came the cheerful reply.

"Never mind what for—bring a spade! Hurry!"

"Why don't you send a boy for it, or fetch it yourself?" she called back. "You're quite near the house and I've got the dinner cooking. It'll serve you right if——"

"*A spade!*" I wailed.

"All right, don't shout so much; I can hear you. You want a spade! All right—but where shall I find one?"

Finally she brought it and very smartly contrived to chop Mr. Snake into sections while I remained standing on his head.

Strangely enough, many natives worship the snake. In Africa this worship is always associated with the belief that the dead return to the world in this shape, so a mamba in the kraal may be somebody's great aunt having a look round to see what has happened in her absence (although, actually, women are more often believed to become contemptible, somnolent lizards, beneath contempt).

Sir John Lubbock, in his *The Origins of Civilization and the Primitive Condition of Man*, goes so

far as to suggest six reasons why serpent worship is common in places as far separated as Egypt, Babylonia, Italy, Thibet, China, Abyssinia and Peru. He suggests that the snake is worshipped :

- (1) Because of its beauty.
- (2) Because of the brilliance of its eyes.
- (3) Because it typifies growth and health.
- (4) Because of fear.
- (5) Totemic in origin.
- (6) Because the quickness of the effect of the poison makes it seem to kill by magical means.

Whatever the cause of its veneration in Africa, witch-doctors almost throughout the continent use the snake as a factor in their peculiar medicines. A method that I have come across is to dry in the sun the heads of dead snakes, and then grind them into a powder. To this are added, also in powdered form, mixed herbs and roots, crocodile and lion teeth, old bones, and any available rubbish with a magical claim (some of it better not described in words, for so much native medicine has a sexual base to its preparation).

Certain witch-doctors have been known to maintain that the heads used for the preparation of an antitoxin for snake-bite must be classified and used accordingly. No self-respecting doctor would expect to cure a man bitten by a puff-adder unless his mixture contained powder from a puff-adder's head ; and so on with each particular snake.

This medicine is used internally and externally. Not only is some rubbed into the bite, but the unfortunate patient is persuaded to swallow a solution of it ; and, strange to say, the treatment is often successful.

I have found that the Bushmen, least civilized of all the natives of Southern Africa, have an astonishing

knowledge of natural poisons and their antidotes, and they claim to be able to render themselves immune from snake-bite by injecting graduated doses of the poison until they are so accustomed to it that they no longer have cause to fear a snake.

I have met white men who kept snakes as pets, but most Europeans treat them with aversion amounting to fear, while they kill them with a strange, ruthless ferocity which seems to take hold of the most placid man when dealing with a snake. This does not stop them from telling stories, tall and otherwise, about snakes.

A Dutchman near Windhoek, on whose waggon I had a lift for several miles, was very interested to hear of the care with which I avoided running over snakes in the road. He told me about a friend of his who had a bicycle. We will call him Van de Merwe, which might be termed the Afrikaans equivalent to Smith.

Van de Merwe was riding along when suddenly he saw what looked like a rubber bicycle-tyre trundling along by itself.

"My tyre must've come off!" decided the startled man; so he stopped and examined both wheels, naturally finding the tyres intact.

"Bless my soul, who can have lost a tyre?" was his next comment.

To answer this question he mounted the bicycle again and sped after the bowling hoop, to find that it was a whip-snake which had stuck its tail in its mouth and was rolling along in emulation of the bicycle-wheel!

This old man retailed an even taller story.

An old Boer and his *vrouw* were lying in bed, and the old man was fast asleep. Suddenly, however, he stirred.

"Don't tickle me, Katje," he protested.

"I'm not tickling you," replied the indignant *wrouw*. "Go to sleep! You're dreaming."

A second time the old man stirred.

"Will you stop tickling!" he complained.

The woman indignantly denied doing any such thing, so, at last, he tried to sleep again. But again he felt the tickling sensation, and this time he was furious.

"If you won't let me sleep, Katje, in my own bed," he fumed, "I'll rest on the floor."

So he threw back the bed-clothes and jumped up—and a snake fell out of the folds of his night-shirt!

III

At last Sir Walter carried me to the outskirts of a scattered collection of buildings, and I realized that I had reached Rehoboth, home of the Bastards, those peculiar half-castes who have remained a national entity through the years of native wars, German occupation, the Great War, and all the vicissitudes which have come to South-West Africa. Another stage of my journey was done; another interesting survival concerned with South-West Africa was become more than a name. I had arrived among the Bastards.

CHAPTER VIII

THE WORLD'S MOST ORIGINAL REPUBLIC

I

QUEER folk, the Rehoboth Bastards, as they unhesitatingly name themselves. My first, and most lasting impression of them concerns a family party which I met before actually reaching the strange, ramshackle little town of Rehoboth, the capital of this proud, Gilbertian "republic." There was father, mother, two daughters and a son. I found them by a Cape-cart with a damaged wheel.

Father, a gloomy old man, very slow moving, slow thinking, and slow speaking, was directing repairs. Tall and wide, dressed in greyish slacks and an old jacket, topped by a wide-brimmed felt hat such as many South African farmers wear, he looked like nothing else but a European who has been out in the sun too long. Only his dark skin betrayed him at a first glance, although closer inspection showed betraying traces of the Hottentot strain in his pedigree. He spoke, in his slow, gentle voice, what sounded like Afrikaans, but actually these people have a queer dialect of their own, containing much old Cape Dutch. He fitted his surroundings better than most men that I met. He belonged to those wild, wide lands, and it needed no effort of the imagination to

visualize him as a great hunter and fearless fighter for independence. And yet there was something missing. His eyes were dulled and suspiciously blood-shot, and it seemed to me that the spirit which inspired these people on their historic trek, and in all their battles and tenacious search for recognition as an independent nation was stultified. The driving-force had gone, leaving nothing but a slothful man, who smoked too much, and probably drank in proportion whenever opportunity offered. The manner in which he lolled there, directing the repair in a muddled, contradictory way, instead of putting his own wide shoulders to the cart, betrayed him.

His wife was small and plumpish, darker than he, dressed in a pale blue sun-bonnet and a frock cut to an antiquated, Victorian pattern—a voluminous affair of drab colouring, with more than a suspicion of a bustle, which reached down to her ankles. She said nothing, seeming content to twiddle her thumbs and wait for the cart to mend itself. I could imagine the women of her “nation” sitting back in just such a fashion and, figuratively, at least, twiddling their thumbs while waiting for their men to win the land from the Hottentots and the Hereros, to persuade the Germans to recognize their right to it, and then further to substantiate such claims before the British authorities and the League of Nations.

The son was a younger edition of the father ; dressed somewhat more roughly ; his figure lacking much of the old man’s width ; his spirit lacking even the hint of old fire. He was much paler skinned, slovenly and drooping, but he actually worked around the damaged cart.

The daughters were a surprise ; I could scarcely

credit the relationship. One of them was almost white and both were reasonably good to look at by modern standards. Their hair was long, fluffy and fine, with nothing of the odd, patchy Hottentot quirk about it ; their eyes were intelligent ; their mouths well-shaped and thin-lipped. Their light frocks were neat, and as fashionable as most of their kind to be found in outlying corners of South Africa. They wore stockings and shoes. One had a big straw hat ; the other a beret. Their manners were certainly either exceptionally good, or they had passed beyond being surprised at anything, for they only waited politely for me to speak, not appearing in the least astonished at my astounding appearance and mount.

I was told where I would find water and warned about a bad stretch of road ; then the consideration of repairs to the cart claimed their attention again, only the son troubling to make any attempt to put suggestions into effect. It seemed to me that they were entirely self-centred, interested solely in problems affecting them at the moment, which is a characteristic that runs like a thread through all the chequered history of this peculiar people.

To begin to gather some understanding of the Bastards one must not be content with viewing them as they are, but must look back to what they have been, for with them the Past is the great essential. Wars, local and international, have left them largely unchanged. Whereas formerly they sat under the old tree, which still stands, fenced in, in the centre of Rehoboth, indulging in voluminous discussion, while they smoked and drank, now they have a humble little Parliament

House, the Raadhuis, where they sit and smoke and talk of their rights under the League of Nations. Always they have been great talkers, but formerly they were men of action. Therein lies the only marked difference.

The Campbells, MacNabs, van Wyks, Diergaards, Carews—those are names of old leaders, significant names; and before them—well, let's seek back into the past and trace the roots of these people.

In the first days of European settlement at the Cape—the days when Van Riebeck was Governor at the vast salary of £7 10s. a month—natives were not employed, beyond a few Hottentot herdboys and interpreters, but, as time went on—after Goske, sixth in the line from van Riebeck, had managed to have the Governor's salary raised to the munificent figure of £25 a month—the labour shortage made itself felt.

The Hottentots were at heart nomad shepherds with warlike tendencies, so they showed no inclination to become the servants of the white men, and so the Dutch had to resort to slavery to fill their requirements. They imported Malays from the east and "blacks" from their stations in Mozambique and Madagascar, and the foundations of the Bastard nation were laid by that decision. Slavery has invariably led to miscegenation, and the introduction of it to the Cape proved no exception.

Male slaves were encouraged to marry Hottentot women, so deep down in that queer cocktail of bloods found in the vicinity of Rehoboth, South West Africa, is a Malay base—as fiery blood as ever came from the East, where numbers of Malays are untamed by all civilization's efforts to this day.

But that was only one ingredient of the cocktail. Capetown was even then earning its title of Tavern of the Seven Seas. Who can say for certain what strange sailors called there, even in those early days? Dutch, Portuguese, English, French, Spanish, all the rovers of that time. And from each ship, when the men went ashore, it was the custom to seek relief from the enforced monasticism they had suffered since leaving the last port, so they visited the homes of the female slaves. Children were born of these unions, coffee-coloured urchins becoming an increasing problem.

Further to complicate matters Pieter van Meerhof, close friend of Wagenaar, the second Governor (the æsthete who begged for window-panes and pictures), married Eva, a Hottentot woman, with much pomp and ceremony, the bridal feast being provided by the Council, and the bride presented with ten pounds by the Governor. This set the seal of official approval upon mixed mating, which naturally increased. Finally, there were men with many female slaves who gave no thought to the future when they had children by them.

From these beginnings grew the Bastards. Much has been written about the Boer Voortrekkers, but, in the Western Cape at least, this community of half-castes were the pioneers. They trekked outwards, driven by the advance of white farmers. They could not live side by side with the whites because of their colour, and they held themselves superior to the natives, shunning those with darker skins than their own; so they drifted northwards, becoming the great hunters and pioneers of the northern borders of the Colony. They welcomed any new infusion of white blood,

but rigidly turned their faces against any addition of the dark strain. They took land to themselves by the simple process of being the first settlers to establish themselves on the ground ; then, when the whites caught up with them, they trekked farther on, seeking always for the independence that was their driving force.

They were soldiers as well as hunters, for they had to fight the elusive little Bushmen with their bows and poisoned arrows, to carve a way for themselves through a wilderness that was barbed with death in many forms. But they had courage and, a quality so often lacking in their kind, vision.

As I have already indicated, at Piquetburg I first learned of how, at the end of the eighteenth century, they occupied a front of six hundred miles along the Orange River. Their leaders they called Captains, and they were served well by those they elected. Missionaries were welcomed by them and played an important part in formulating the cohesion of these strange people. Their ways of life became comparatively civilized, as they raised themselves further from the level of the dark blood in them. They drew up a code of laws on a Biblical basis, some of which are quite original and might well give cause for thought in any European community. Their law of divorce, as framed in that original statute book (a school exercise-book) was simple—" If a husband leaves his wife without reason, his goods shall be confiscated and given to his wife, and *vice versa*."

But in 1865 the Land Beacons Act was passed by the Cape Parliament, by which the occupiers of all land in the Colony were compelled to prove their title to it, and Crown lands were thrown open for sale or lease.

The Bastards had no legal title to their land, so—after the usual lengthy session of talk—they applied to the Government to purchase a large farm for them. News of this application was received hostilely by the white population, who bitterly attacked the Bastards, saying that, if the request were granted, they would become a “curse to the country.”

The unhappy people took the disappointment as quietly as they have taken many others. They packed up again and trekked on. Hermanus van Wyk and Giel Diergaardt, two Captains, explored the land north of the Orange River, and, as a result, their followers went after them into the unmapped land that is now South-West Africa.

Their great, lumbering waggons must have made a striking sight as they wound their way through that slag-heap of rock and sand immediately beyond the Orange River, long whips cracking, harsh voices urging on the straining oxen. They battled their way through the southern desert and the dreary land beyond it, fighting drought, danger from wild beasts, and harassing attacks by the nimble Bushmen. The safety of all their worldly goods, and the future of their “nation,” depended then upon the keen eyesight of their scouts and deadly marksmanship with their muzzle-loaders.

Steadily they trekked on until they found their Land of Canaan. With shrewd judgment they picked the best land to be found in the territory, that stretch of fine ranching land which has Rehoboth for its centre, park-like grasslands, studded with the huge thorn trees.

The Hereros and the Hottentots had recently waged incessant, internecine war over this area,

which concluded with the signing of a peace treaty in 1870. The three great chiefs—Kamaharero of the Hereros, Abraham Swartbooï of the Namaqua Hottentots, and Jan Jonker Afrikaner of the Afrikaner clan were gathered together for this purpose, so Hermanus van Wyk, the Captain of the Bastard community, seized the opportunity to approach them and bargain for the land his people wanted.

He first approached Swartbooï, chief of the Young Red Nation, as they called themselves, for van Wyk knew that his branch of Hottentot Orlams had last been in possession of Rehoboth. This meeting can be imagined. One can picture the fierce, proud, native Hereros, the semi-Europeanized Hottentot freebooters, and the suave, Quakerish Bastard Captain and his councillors, spending long hours in rolling great words round their tongues in the exchange of the windy speeches that these picturesque people loved to utter. And all around them a series of armed camps, hands seldom straying far from spears and ancient blunderbusses.

Swartbooï agreed to let the Bastards have Rehoboth ; they could live there for as long as the Swartboois did not need the place for themselves ; the rent to be a horse a year. (That seems ridiculously reasonable rent for a stretch of land the size of Ireland, but the whole of the Cape Peninsula, the foundation of the Union of South Africa, was acquired in exchange for goods to the value of £9 12s. 9d.) The Bastards were also promised first refusal if the Swartboois ever decided to sell Rehoboth.

Later there was considerable contention over this, for Kamaharero claimed Rehoboth, and Dr.

Hahn, a missionary who had been in South-West Africa since 1841, intervened with the wisdom of a Solomon ; but to this day statesmen cannot decide upon the legality or otherwise, or the actual terms of the agreement by which the Bastards entered into possession of their Gebeit at and around Rehoboth.

Let old Hermanus van Wyk, that shrewd, forceful Captain of the Bastards, give his version in his own words (as given in the Report of the Special Commissioner, W. Coates Palgrave, who was sent from Capetown in 1876 to obtain information about South-West Africa and ascertain whether the chiefs were desirous of coming under the Government of the Cape Colony).

“Hermanus van Wyk stated : ‘ I was born in the Cape Colony in the district of Fraserburg, and for some years lived in the neighbourhood of Amandelboom and de Tuin. I trekked from the Colony in 1868, and came as far as the Berseba veld, where I and my followers settled down and remained for about four months. I first came into this country in October 1870. On my first coming into the country the Namaqua chiefs told me that the country was in a state of war. My object in coming was to look for ground. They, the chiefs, were then about to visit Damaraland to try and make peace, and asked me to accompany them, as I might find a piece of ground to settle on. At that time there was no one but a Berg Damara living on Rehoboth. I accompanied the Namaqua chiefs and we went to Kamaharero. The terms of peace were then discussed, and when the peace was concluded, I went to the Rev. Mr. Hahn to ask him his advice. Two of my councillors accompanied me. Mr. Hahn advised me to go to

Abraham Swartbooi who, he said, had still the right to Rehoboth. Abraham Swartbooi was at Okahandja, and we went to him and asked him whether we could live at Rehoboth.

“ ‘ Abraham agreed to our request in the presence of Jan Jonker Africaner, some of his own people, and my two councillors, Piet Beukes and Paul Isaacs. Abraham informed Kamaharero of this and he expressed his satisfaction at this agreement. When Abraham Swartbooi gave his consent, and Kamaharero expressed his satisfaction, I gave them each a horse. I promised Jan Jonker one, and when we trekked on to this place, I gave him one and also one to Aponda (chief of the Hereros at Barmen). On our arrival here I found Barnabas, and informed him that the other chiefs had given me the place and he agreed to it, and expressed his satisfaction. This was in 1870. When we arrived we set to work and made the place habitable, opened the water and led it out to make gardens, built houses, and repaired the church.’ Here Piet Beukes stated :

“ ‘ I was present at Okahandja when Swartbooi gave us the place to live on, and he said it was his intention to trek further in and look for a place, but was not in a position to do so, we wanted to assist him and gave him some horses.’

“ Van Wyk continued : ‘ It was in this wise that I gave Swartbooi the eight horses. He gave us the place and ground which he said he and his people had themselves occupied. I understood that Abraham Swartbooi gave me the ground, and had no intention of returning to it ; but he told me afterwards that that was not his intention. He promised at Okahandja that he would come and point out the boundaries of the place, so soon

as I brought my people to it. When I asked Abraham for the place at Okahandja, and he gave it to me, he said : " Go and write down what I have given you, and I will sign it," but it was not done at the time, but Abraham said that so soon as he had pointed out the boundaries, it could be written down, and he would sign it. He came some considerable time after we arrived on the place, described the boundaries, but seemed disinclined to sign anything and so it was not done.

" " After this I offered to purchase the place. We had heard that there was another attempt made to buy the place and as we did not wish to be driven off we went and offered to buy it. We went to Bokburg, where Abraham was, and it was agreed between us that if he sold the place to anyone, it would be to us.'

" MEMO.—Van Wyk produced a written agreement to this effect, in which a price is agreed upon, being 100 horses at £25 each, and 5 wagons at £50 each, dated, written and signed as witnesses by J. BOEHM, and signed by ABRAHAM SWARTBOOI, CAPTAIN ; SIMON HENDRIK, REGTER ; LOT, REGTER ; TIMOTHEUS SWARTBOOI, MANASSEH SWARBOOI, HERMANUS VAN WYK, and dated Ameib, 23rd December, 1857.

" H. van Wyk continues : ' As shown by the agreement, I was to pay 100 horses and 5 waggon. I have not purchased it yet. As far as Abraham Swartbooi is concerned, I consider that I still have the right to purchase if I choose.' "

From these reported words of the Grand Old Man of the Rehoboths it will be appreciated, not merely how insecure were their foundations, but how firm was their resolution and honest their

purpose. These Bastards were no land-grabbers, nor did they propose to be bad neighbours. They were willing to pay within their means for what they took, and in those early days at least they worked vigorously to improve what they had at last secured.

They set to work to build their capital, that strange, ramshackle little town under its hill of pink granite. Water was scarce, of course, but by blasting they obtained a supply, in the neighbourhood of which they made gardens and planted crops for their requirements. Meanwhile their cattle thrived on the land which later experts assess as some of the finest ranching country in the world, and it must have seemed to those simple, steadfast people that the Lord had indeed led them to the Promised Land. He had guided them across the wilderness and enabled them to erect an island of comparative civilization in the middle of land which incessantly suffered from the strife of the barbarians beyond the Rehoboth boundaries.

They build their Raadhuis, that Gilbertian Parliament House, where they indulge in voluminous talk to this day ; and what a missionary (the Rev. W. Dower) has said of their relatives the Griquas, away in distant Kokstad, holds good of the Rehoboth Bastards : " The deputies were entertained hospitably at Government expense during the session. The length of the session depended upon the size of the animal slaughtered. When the beef gave out the House rose. No beef, no business, was the standing rule of the assembly. The cooking operations . . . were carried on close to the House of Parliament, and the big pot was so placed that the members would know the

progress of the operations while in session and inhale grateful odours as an earnest of the coming feast."

But between these vast marathons of talk, tobacco and beef, the Bastards had to fight to hold their homes. Monuments still stand in the Gebeit (as their territory is called) to some of their encounters with the marauding Hottentots. Tenaciously, and with all that simple faith and inherent cohesion and loyalty which inspired the early *white* settlers in America, this community of mixed-bred out-castes battled against all comers to retain the foothold it had gained in the wilderness.

And then came the Germans.

II

The Bastards, together with several tribes of Hottentots, had asked for British protection and control, but the Cape Government was not allowed to extend British influence north of the Orange River, except to annex Walvis Bay, and a few square miles of desert in the vicinity; so the Germans stepped in.

Missionaries had already served as advance agents for the Fatherland. The Hereros, the Hottentots, the Bastards—almost every tribe was advised by a missionary. Romantic lives were lived by those earnest, ubiquitous representatives of the Rhenish Mission Society of Berlin, and their activities are written in history by their signatures. Treaties between the warring people almost invariably included the signature of a missionary,

while disputes were brought to them which required the wisdom of Solomon, the skill of a super-diplomatist.

They were followed by German merchants, scientists and prospectors, and, in 1883, Adolf Luderitz, a merchant of Bremen, bought from the chief of the Aman Hottentots that stretch of land on which stands Luderitzburcht—(Luderitz, that sand-surrounded little port which is now the centre of the diamond industry). From this first footing in the country Germany began to plan expansion, and it is interesting to find that, in 1885, the Controller of the German Colonial Company in South-West Africa was the father of General Goering, that prop of Nazi power in Europe.

Between 1883 and 1885 a lengthy correspondence passed between the Governments of Germany, Great Britain and Cape Colony, and, principally because the Cape Government delayed its decision to accept responsibility for such a Cinderella-land—even as the Union Government continues the policy of delay to-day—the territory was annexed by Germany.

From the start the Hereros refused to acknowledge them, and the redoubtable old Kamaharero told Dr. Goering that “*if they (the Germans) did not wish to see their heads lying at their feet they should be out of Okahandja and well on their way to Germany before sunset.*” But with their usual wish to be at peace with their neighbours, and eager for a strong power to assume control and restore order along their boundaries, the Bastards met the Germans amicably. There was more talk, and the Rehoboth councillors succeeded in obtaining, on 15th September, 1885, a treaty from

the new masters of the territory which acknowledged their independence.

Because it is naturally of importance in considering the future of the Territory, here is this strange document in full :

TREATY OF PROTECTION AND AMITY
BETWEEN THE GERMAN EMPIRE AND
THE BASTARDS OF REHOBOTH

His Majesty the German Emperor, King of Prussia, Wilhelm I, in the name of the German Empire on the one part, and the independent Chief of the Bastards of Rehoboth, Captain Hermanus van Wyk for himself and his heirs and successors, on the other part, are desirous to enter into a treaty of protection and amity.

For this purpose, the plenipotentiary of the German Emperor, the Rev. C. G. Beuttner, and the Captain Hermanus van Wyk, together with his councillors, have agreed on the following terms :

(1)

Captain Hermanus von Wyk requests His Majesty the German Emperor to take over the protection of his country and people. His Majesty complies with this request and assures the Captain of his all-highest protection. As an outward sign of this protection the German flag is to be hoisted.

(2)

His Majesty the German Emperor acknowledges the rights and liberties which have been acquired by the Bastards of Rehoboth, and binds himself to maintain such treaties and agreements which have been entered into by them with other nations and the subjects thereof, and also under-

takes not to hinder the Captain in the collection of the revenue to which he is entitled in accordance with the laws and customs of his country.

(3)

The Captain of the Bastards of Rehoboth binds himself not to dispose of his country or any portion thereof to any other nation or the subjects thereof, or to enter into agreements or treaties with any other Government without the consent of the German Emperor.

(4)

The Captain promises to protect the life and property of all German subjects and friends. He confers on them the right and liberty to travel, reside, work, buy and sell within the boundaries of his territory. But the inhabitants of the District of Rehoboth reserve to themselves the right to stipulate the conditions in each case under which the foreigners may remain in their country.

On the other hand, the German subjects and friends shall respect the laws and customs of the country, commit no offence against the laws of their country, and pay such taxes and dues to the Captain, which have been customary hitherto or which may be agreed upon in the future between the Captain and the German Empire. The Captain on the other hand binds himself not to concede greater rights and privileges to any other nation than to German subjects.

(5)

With regard to the civil and criminal jurisdiction within the territory of Rehoboth, it is herewith decided that all disputes of the citizens of Rehoboth



TROUBLE

amongst themselves shall be adjudicated by their own judges. In the case of disputes between citizens of Rehoboth and such persons who are not citizens, a mixed tribunal shall have jurisdiction, to which judges shall be empowered by His Majesty the German Emperor and the Captain of Rehoboth.

All disputes between persons who are not citizens of Rehoboth or who are not members of their families shall be adjudicated by that person who has been empowered by His Majesty the German Emperor to do so. This also applies to criminal cases.

In all disputes, including those of the citizens of Rehoboth, appeals may be lodged with the court of His Majesty the German Emperor, by whom the final decision shall be given.

(6)

The Captain binds himself to maintain as much as possible and assist in the maintenance of peace in Great Namaqualand and the neighbouring countries. And in case he should have any dispute with the other Chiefs in Great Namaqualand or of the neighbouring countries, he will first ask for the opinion of the German Government and request that the dispute be settled by the intervention of the German Government.

(7)

In case there exist any other points which require settlement between the German Empire and the Captain of the Bastards of Rehoboth, these shall be settled by future special agreement between the two Governments.

Rehoboth, 15th September, 1885.

(Signed) C. G. BUETTNER,
Plenipotentiary of His Majesty the German
Emperor.

(Signed) H. VAN WYK.

(X) JOCOBUS MOUTTON.

WILHELM KOOPMAN.

JOHANNES DIERGARD.

(X) DIERK VAN WYK.

(X) JOCOBUS MOUTTON.

WILLEM VAN WYK.

As witness : F. HEIDMANN, Missionary.

The (X) represents the " mark " of those who could not write their names. One can picture the fingers which never drew trigger until certain of a hit, fumbling with the unfamiliar pen ; and you will observe that ubiquitous designation after the final signature—" Missionary." So many strange old documents out of Africa, treaties which ended, or at least brought a pause to old wars, have that word at the foot.

III

The Bastards lived up to that agreement. Until the outbreak of the Great War in 1914 introduced new factors into their loyalty (for it must be remembered their roots were planted in Cape Colony), they served the Germans. They joined them in the campaigns against the Hottentots and the Hereros, for German occupation brought anything but peace to South-West Africa, and many of them laid down their lives in German interests.

But the Great War brought the crisis into their

lives again, proving that the world was determined not to leave them untouched by events that shook much of the rest of the globe. South African troops under General Botha advanced into the territory, and the Germans called up the Bastards for service. Although their loyalties were already divided, they answered the call. They were prepared to serve behind the lines, but when they were forced into military uniforms their independent spirits began to rebel. Next they were ordered to guard captured Union soldiers, while all the time efforts seem to have been made to force them into the fighting line.

At last, in March 1915, the new Captain, Cornelis van Wijk, made a daring, secret journey through the German lines to lay his case before General Botha, to whom he explained that his people were not voluntarily acting against the Union troops. He then returned to his home and repeated his declaration to the Germans that his people would not fight against the troops from South Africa.

Near Rehoboth is a tumbled range of mountains, and an elderly man pointed out to me where, for a day and a night, the burghers fought for that same independence of theirs. Many of them armed with old-fashioned rifles and black powder, they defied regular German troops with Maxims and field-guns, and survived to welcome the British troops under General Mackenzie.

That old man, lazy and garrulous, never happier than when able to sit and smoke and talk with an interested audience, should probably have been doing various jobs around his dilapidated, poverty-stricken home, but he knew the history of his people. Stored away in his mind was a medley

of memories, sweet and bitter, mixed with pride of race and that yearning for absolute independence ; but the former were too strong for the latter. Memories swamped his aspirations. He lived too much in the past, lacking the energy to do more than talk about present or future. His farm could go to ruin—in fact, his one ambition, as he admitted, was to obtain permission to rent the land to a white man. Then he could sit back and do more smoking and talking amidst comparative luxuries provided by the rent.

That is the ambition of too many of his kind, and if it were not for a wise law, strictly enforced by the white administration, that no Bastard may sell his land to anyone outside the community, they would soon be landless. All that those old councillors strove so valiantly for would vanish, and the people of what must be the world's most original republic become a vanished race.

Even now they tempt the white men to aid them to ignore that law, for the land—the best area in the Territory, with its fine grazing and good trees—is shockingly neglected. I rode for miles over land which could have supported larger herds than all the rest of the country I had passed through put together, and found it almost unstocked. Buck roamed at will ; more depredatory game seemed to have a free pass ; for the people are now too fundamentally lazy, and too busy talking about writing to the League of Nations, to produce such hunters as one of the Moutons, who used to strip naked and smear his body with oil, and then go hunting elephant with an old, single-shot blunderbuss.

But the old war-like spirit is not entirely lost. My confidant was involved in the 1925 rising

against the Administration. They claimed that they were being treated as Union citizens and not an independent "republic," and once more they prepared to fight for that independence. Again they took up arms, and Rehoboth became an armed camp. With all the old fire they made their plans and organized their forces, and, to complicate matters for the authorities, the Herero chiefs accepted "watching briefs" at this trial of strength. Many people in South Africa do not seem to appreciate that this was the case; that any temporary setback to the administration of the law would have been the signal for the war fires to blaze again on every hill-top as signals to the fierce Hereros to rise and sweep the white men into the sea.

But the Administration of South-West Africa assembled a large commando, to which were added aeroplanes, and the discipline of the former, coupled with the moral effect of the latter, proved to the Bastards that their independence could no longer be maintained by force of arms. After a brisk fight, several hundred rebels were captured and order restored.

But with that tact which is the successful factor in the administration of native people within the British Commonwealth of Nations, the Bastards were left to live under their quaint old laws undisturbed, with one change—a white magistrate took his seat in their Raad as Captain. So they still talk and talk in that little Parliament House, but a white man occupies the Captain's place, restraining the injudicious, prompting the slow-moving, slow-thinking burghers, and striving to lift them out of their present sloth, without interfering with the majority of their old customs

and laws. It is he who enforces so strictly the law prohibiting the sale of land to foreigners, thereby saving them from themselves. And, for obvious reasons with a people about whom it was cynically said in the past that—"a Bastard would part with his farm for a bottle of brandy," the law has been added to those old statutes of theirs that no burgher may buy liquor without a permit from the police, and such permits are never granted to women.

Wise, well intended nursing of backward people again, but a section of the community—to which my confidant belonged—hopes vaguely that the League of Nations, in answer to many petitions, will send away that white Captain and give them the independence they sought when first they crossed the Orange River. Such a course would be the doom of the Bastards; the colourful community, which survived the aggressions of native and white enemies, would speedily wipe itself off the map.

IV

I asked the old man what he thought about the possibility of the return of the territory to Germany and at last his eyes flashed with a hint of the fire that must lie dormant in these people.

"Never! It has been promised that they shall not. That promise will not be broken," he insisted.

He told me that if I had seen what he had seen—men hanging from trees; violated native women killed in their tracks—if I knew anything of the oppression of Herero and Hottentot which, in several cases, the Bastards were forced into aiding

the Germans to institute—I would not make the suggestion.

I found it hard to believe much of what I was told, but in Appendix B at the end of this book I give some sworn statements on the subject, all of which are confirmed from several quarters. I began to realize that there was more to the question of the return of South-West to Germany than the economic exigencies of present-day politics—that the past must rise up as a barrier.

“But the Germans would not act like that next time. Civilization has advanced. There would be a different type of settler,” I suggested; but doubted my own statements as I uttered them. Recent history in Germany, the suppression of all those who do not see eye-to-eye with those in power, the treatment of the Jews—do these offer much hope of less ruthless control of a quick-tempered, racially proud collection of native peoples, such as is found in South-West Africa?

I went on my way beyond the boundaries of the Rehoboth Gebeit with much to think over as Sir Walter carried me towards the snug little city of Windhoek, administrative capital of South-West Africa.

CHAPTER IX

UPWARDS AND ONWARDS

I

" DOES the road wind uphill all the way ? " . . . You bet it does ! Less politely, I repeated that to myself most of the journey from Rehoboth *up* to Windhoek. In fact, I never realized before that so much of Elizabeth Barret Browning's *Cyclist's Lament* had remained at the back of my mind since schooldays, and very much doubt if she would have recognized the version I recited to Sir Walter and the mountains around Windhoek.

Even Sir Walter gave tongue with a strident, ear-torturing accompaniment. He had been showing signs for some time of developing idiosyncracies which can only be described as damnable ; and now he *squeaked* ! Squealed would be a truer description. My home in England is not far from a butcher's, where they kill their pork on Tuesdays. Tuesdays now remind me of Sir Walter's persistent roundelay. Reckless rations of oil, inserted in all the recognized places and everywhere else that offered a crack for it, only seemed to make the recurring notes more discordant. The only way to silence him was to get off and push. He didn't squeak then ! But even a " crooning " bicycle was better than plodding along on foot, I thought. (That was before I came to the new lot of moun-

tains and had to push most of the time, anyway.)

Sir Walter began to show other symptoms of decrepitude. The poor old lad was breaking up under a strain which would have severely tested a bicycle of much less ancient vintage. He had carried my unfair load up incredible tracks into the mountains and swept down into the long valleys on the far side. He had bounced and slithered and ploughed over stony wastes, along roads which only existed in surveyors' imaginations (and many that did not even exist there), through thick sand, and over, among, and in, pot-holes, gullies, ridges and roots. Can he be blamed for developing the I'm-so-tired-must-you-torment-me-like-thissqueak which accompanied me for hour after hour across country, and which made me feel as bad as it sounded?

As for his other complaints—well, I do not want to seem to find fault with him, but it is true that the chain either broke because it was too tight, or slipped off the cog because it was too loose. And I hope I may be forgiven for mentioning that the pedals periodically jammed so that my feet slipped off, whereupon I either overbalanced, or round spun the pedal and hacked me savagely on the calf. And the attachment to hold the saddle at the desired height lost its grip, with the result that I would raise the seat to its full extent in the morning—starting the day like some grotesque bird on a perch, feet just touching the pedals—and after a few hours (a period which grew shorter daily) I would be folded up, my hind-quarters brought to the level of the cross-bar, and my knees scraping against the brake levers and disturbing the steering.

But when I think what might have happened—the irreparable break-downs miles from anywhere, the parts of Sir Walter's anatomy that might have cracked up, and the desperate plight I would have been in if he broke down altogether—I take my hat off to the machine and the men who made it. If they thought at all beyond the job of the moment, those draughtsmen, mechanics and the rest, responsible jointly for the creation of Sir Walter, possibly visualized him coasting placidly down England's highways and byways—not being scooped out of a Capetown shop in old age, and launched on a hair-brained journey into a wilderness that even the motorist hesitates to tackle.

Considering the price I paid, and the bicycle's evident age, Sir Walter was a gem, and I hate to contemplate his fate—being ridden by a puce-coloured rascal in patched trousers, who probably never pumps up the tyres and does not know the meaning of the word oil. *Sic transit gloria mundi*—which, being translated, should mean—"Why did I need the money so badly?"

Of course Sir Walter and I shed things on our journey north. I wish to state here that the gentleman, or lady (white or coloured), who finds the top half of a bicycle bell in the Western Cape (somewhere around Malmesbury), or a mudguard somewhere near Eendenuil, or a grey sock on the road beyond Clanwilliam (its mate is a day's journey to the east), or sundry nuts, bolts, buttons, straps, strings, and other impedimenta anywhere between Capetown and the north of South-West Africa, need not return them. There will be no reward.

I twice lost Sir Walter, and once almost had him stolen. The first time he was mislaid happened

in the Cape, at that same queer little hotel that did not give me scrambled eggs. Like so many African buildings this hotel had a welter of sheds behind it. It is such a simple procedure to build another shed in a land where labour is comparatively cheap and poles to be had for the chopping, that most South African house-owners have developed the habit until it has become a disease. Huts spring up all over the place like the spots in a measles rash. Piet Van-Something, on his way into the shed to see what's happening in the incubator, trips over the wheelbarrow; so he builds a separate garage for the latter. Before long every available bit of ground behind the house supports a hut, shed, or enclosure; and I know of one man in whom this mania became so developed that he had to be restrained from building each separate fowl on his poultry farm a detached residence. Doubtless the Kafirs started it all, for whenever they take a new wife they build her a hut, so that the homes of some of these polygamous gentlemen soon assume the proportions of thriving villages.

I remember one old white man who had turned native—but I had better not tell you that one. It will suffice to say that it took three long buck-wagons to move his wives and families when the Government ejected him, and his homestead had more buildings on it than the nearest dorp.

But I have strayed as far from my point as I often did from the road I intended to follow. I have lost myself in a welter of huts, which is precisely what happened to Sir Walter at that hotel.

I was tired when I arrived, and only too glad to push the bike in through a doorway and turn the key in the lock. But next day, when ready

to start off again, I could not find the lock. To be precise, I could not find the shed! I tried various locks, but the key would not fit any of them. I was reduced to looking through key-holes to try and locate Sir Walter.

I went back to the hotel and hunted out the proprietor, but he was half asleep still. He had forgotten any English he knew the night before. Also he was grumpy.

"Shed—bicycle—mine!" I explained, waving the key at him.

He nodded. I understood him to say that, as I had paid my bill like an honest man, he had no objection to my collecting my property. He shook my hand and bade me "Good-bye," rather giving the impression that he was glad to be rid of me.

Then he apparently told me to close the door behind me and leave the key in the lock. I gave up the task of trying to make him understand that I could not find the lock, and drifted out into that welter of sheds again. I decided to try each door in turn, beginning at one end.

The idea was sound, but something went wrong with the execution of it. I was thrown out of my stride by finding a door which opened after some juggling with the key.

"At last!" I thought; but an angry shout from somewhere in the house was the prelude to the discovery that I was illegally entering the store where they kept some of the liquor. I shut the door hurriedly and explained to all nearby windows that I was looking for my bicycle; but the voice refused to materialize into anything so useful as a guide, and offered no helpful instructions.

All this made me nervous of trying other doors, but I persevered. I felt that I was being watched all the time, and have since toyed with the theory that the proprietor and his wife locked themselves in a room overlooking the sheds, from which they watched my nefarious attempts to break in and rob—only giving tongue when the liquor was threatened—while a messenger ran for the police. (The truth is, of course, that they had long decided that I was mad, and that playing with door locks was a comparatively innocuous feature of my mania.) Or it may have been merely that they enjoyed witnessing a “rooinek’s” confusion (memories of Majuba!).

Anyway, I found Sir Walter in the end. He was not in any of those sheds, but in another out-crop on the far side of the house.

The second time I mislaid him was a Desert Drama—almost a Tragedy of the Barren Lands. I leant him against a rock by one of those bizarre, flat-topped kopjes in that nightmare stretch of country between Upington and Kalkfontein, while I climbed to the summit to see if there was anything to be seen at all. There wasn’t! So I slithered and scrambled down again.

“Nobody seems to live here; the railway and the Orange River have combined to lose themselves—the same as me! The compass is cock-eyed, and I am probably heading north into the Kalahari; next stop the Zambesi, if I last that long. There’s no life, not even a spider or a fly—and there’s no bloody water! Rex, we’re sunk!”

That is a pretty fair résumé of the thoughts in my mind; and then I could not find the bicycle!

I looked all about me. There was the rock—dozens of them, all identical!

I looked back up the kopje. "Of course, fool that I am, I've come down the wrong side!"

So up I clambered again, and, believe me, I had not got much strength to spare for mountaineering; but I told myself that only by clambering to the top again could I be sure of descending to where I originally started. But that excellent scheme also went wrong somewhere in the course of its execution. I must have taken another wrong turning, for I duly got to the bottom—but still there was no Sir Walter!

Was I mad? (as our cousins would say on the movies). Brother, I just gave all I'd got—and, believe me, that was voluble. I could bow my head with shame when I remember what I said. That was a seared wilderness before I started in to describe it; by the time I had done there was nothing left to frizzle, and sand-paper is velvet compared to the state that my throat was in.

Nothing would make me climb those rocks again, so I scouted around the edge. I had to sit down occasionally because I was not quite so spry as before the water-ration got down to an insignificant mouth-wash and an unpleasant smell in the bottom of the bottle. Believe it or not, I shouted to Sir Walter, and cursed because there was no reply; and I distinctly remember saying, "Where the hell have you been?" when I found the bike at last. It had fallen over (as usual); that was all.

II

The attempt to steal Sir Walter happened a few miles beyond Windhoek, so as this narrative has

not reached the town yet, I had better jam on brakes and get back to the road. Remind me to tell you about the Encounter with the Highwayman as we leave town. Meanwhile, here is Windhoek !

In the distance one part of it looks like a European village. There is the usual tall church spire ; the cluster of red-roofed houses ; green avenues of trees ; scattered clumps of ditto, suggesting gardens and parks ; but on the opposite ridge—what are those rows upon rows of huts ? Shades of what I have recently said about South Africans, surely the craze to build extra accommodation overnight cannot have reached such a pitch as to cover all that ground. There are thousands of huts there——

Then sanity reasserted itself sufficiently for me to realize that I was looking at the native location. Those tin shanties of all shapes (some as nearly shapeless as walls and roof could become in an architect's nightmare) ; those pole and matting beehive-shaped shelters—all of them, stretched in geometrical rows of blobs across the land, are the homes of the coloured folk who work or loaf around Windhoek. I learnt later that there is a European superintendent in charge of the location, and that the people who dwell there are divided according to their tribes, the vast collection of huts being composed of a series of separate communities.

A resident of Windhoek later asked me if I had mistaken the excrescences on the hillside for the town, and added, joking aside, that they are a blot on the landscape. He wanted to sweep them away and put up modern tenements for native workers in some obscure corner ; but those

rows of huts, with their segregated population, are the most interesting corner of Windhoek.

I had intended to rest there for a few days, but (a) I had not the time to spare, and (b) there was nothing worth staying for. Windhoek is one of those small administrative centres with big responsibilities, where the population is obstinately divided on every topic, where a broad line is drawn between Officials and Others, and the only excitement of note is when somebody drinks coffee and hobnobs with somebody else out of another clique. It has a suburb called Klein-Windhoek, set in a saucer surrounded by hills, where much fruit-growing and market-gardening flourish, but Windhoek itself shouts aloud of Suburbia. Doubtless this is because it started life as a bit of Germany transplanted to African soil, and it has never grown out of that. It looks as though it should form the outskirts of a city, not the nucleus of one.

Like all German towns it is well-planned and laid out, but they did not have time to finish their job and little seems to have been done to it since. There are wide streets, blocks of fine, solid-looking buildings, shops with vast expanses of plate-glass and modern fittings, imposing administrative buildings, and a post office that I mistook for still another church (everybody seems to be provided for spiritually, judging by the number of the latter); but side turnings off the main street usually deteriorate within a few yards into streams of dust. Vast gaps show blankly between buildings, and on closer inspection rather resemble corporation dumps.

Perhaps climbing those mountains disagreed with my liver, but the atmosphere of Windhoek

jarred. Here were more whites together in one place than anywhere else in the Territory, and friction was not far below the surface. Not only did the German language predominate, but of the three newspapers printed in the town—the German gets his news and views in his language three times a week, the English paper appears twice weekly, and the Afrikaans once. Chats with people picked at random indicated that none of them particularly cared what happened to South-West Africa in the future, except that the present state of stagnation must come to an end. An Englishman, an Afrikaner and a German, all repeated that view, the latter adding that the matter would not be settled in Africa—but not one of them was giving a moment's consideration to the races from which have sprung the workers who live in those rows of huts on the ridge. Those people were not considering the natives as a factor in the question; I doubt if they had ever heard of Lord Buxton's categorical promise to the native races in October, 1918;¹ they were only thinking commercially of the capital which must be attracted to South-West Africa for its expansion.

Three picturesque buildings which resemble the smaller Schlösser found along the Rhine are significant symbols in Windhoek; they reflect

¹ Lord Buxton said: "Firstly, in no circumstances will the country be handed back to Germany. Secondly, the territory will in future form an integral portion of the Union. Thirdly, whatever may be the final constitution of the League of Nations, however international it may be, and whether Germany will ultimately be represented on it or not, neither of the above two premises will be open to reconsideration. They have been settled irrevocably once and for all by the Peace Treaty." Europeans can appreciate that recent history robs that promise of much of its value, but the natives, with a ridiculous belief in a white man's integrity, cannot be expected to realize that the treaty referred to is apparently of less value in international politics to-day than the paper it is written on.

the day when Windhoek was linked to Berlin by one of the most powerful of pre-war wireless stations. The link still exists—not the wireless, but control from Berlin—for a considerable section of the German element acts and thinks as directed by Auslands-Organization of the Nazi Government in Germany.

I give in Appendix A (page 291) extracts from evidence that, from 1933 on, deliberate efforts were made from Germany to Nazify all German institutions in the territory. Subversive propaganda was conducted in an underhand manner—"to drum Hitler's programme into the Germans here to make a fight for the return of South-West to Germany as soon as possible by calling everyone a traitor, and treating everyone as a traitor who does not think and act similarly."

In 1934 the wearing of political uniforms was declared illegal and the Nazi Party banned, but this does not seem to have made much real difference, except to divert their energies into more underground channels. For obvious reasons I do not want to say more than what is backed by the official evidence contained in the appendix for vague statements and personal observations, no matter how convincing they may be to the observer on the spot, are merely boomerangs. The truth ringing in a man's voice when he makes a statement, unsupported by proof, carries conviction to no one but the audience of the moment.

In the ranks of the Deutsche Bund (the political party representing the majority of the German element) and in the minds of individual Germans scattered throughout the territory, is that dragooned adherence to the Leader and all that he stands for, and they will, naturally, use all

available means to secure Nazi domination of South-West Africa.

I have recently described an incident at an hotel in the Western Cape. I stayed overnight at three hotels in different parts of South-West Africa. My conversation with the proprietor of one of them seems to me to shed a new light upon the present state of affairs.

He was an elderly man, and had been in the territory off and on, since 1909. His hotel was essentially German. It might have been lifted, lock, stock and barrel, from anywhere along the Rhine and deposited in some magical fashion alongside the railway on the edge of the wilderness. There was all the solid comfort of the typical German menage ; the heavy old-fashioned furniture ; the vast flock coverings on the beds ; a multiplicity of mirrors ; even the prodigal display of elaborate electric-light fittings which seems to be a feature of German hotels ; and the old man himself was simply a chip of the Fatherland. He spoke English very haltingly and practically no Afrikaans, and seemed to consider it unnecessary to trouble to learn either.

Over a beer with real ice in it, with the knowledge that a bed with real sheets was waiting for me, and after such a meal as a German hotelier knows how to provide—solid fare such as a starving man dreams about—I discussed the future of South-West Africa with him, while we sat on the stoep and admired a sunset which must rank as one of its charms.

“ Europe must settle our fate, one way or the other,” said he. “ South-West Africa cannot decide. We are only a small white population, with too much at stake for politics. Let them

settle our future in Europe ; all we wish for is to be rid of the present uncertainty. Whatever the ruling we will follow it amicably and make a success of it, but we must know where we stand. At present we stagnate. We have mineral wealth untapped—gold, copper, tin. We have great potential pastoral wealth—already there are those who achieve prosperity from the breeding of karakuls, which thrive here. But we only scratch at the surface. We are all afraid to dig ourselves in. Who will sink big money—the big money we need—when we do not know to whom we will belong to-morrow ? ”

He went on to say that, in his opinion, the majority of all races would not protest at return to Germany. Whatever government eventually shoulders the full responsibility of South-West Africa must give whole-hearted support to the opening up of the territory. The Union of South Africa has other areas to develop, which will show a swifter return on the funds expended, but Germany would take over South-West with new ideas and the determination to show the critical world that she can make a success of them. She would be like someone entering a new job after a long period of unemployment, eager to prove her worth, tackling problems with all the energy and concentration of a new broom on trial.

This was a new viewpoint on the problem, but the hotel proprietor also overlooked the factor of the natives. He asserted that the future of the territory would be settled in Europe. On page 306 of Appendix A, you will find reiterated in letters from official sources in Germany this same conviction. “ . . . I am of opinion that the future of South-West Africa will not be decided in

South-West Africa at all, but here in Germany. . . .” “The decision whether South-West Africa is ever to be German again will not be made in South-West Africa, and not in the Union, but here in Europe. . . .” “We all hope that South-West Africa will again be German, but as I have already said, the matter will not be determined there, but here in Europe.”

In other words, by strokes of their pens and the affixing of seals, the Germans hope that European politicians will dispose of the Hereros, the Hottentots, the Bastards, and the rest. They forget the stories that are still told outside the native huts of tortured men, violated women, and a whole nation driven out into the desert to die. They ignore proof in the official archives of inhuman floggings for paltry offences, of broken promises by a ruthless administration. Perhaps they hope that the memory of the native is equally short, but I can assure them that such hope is vain. The African native may never seem to give much thought to the future, but he never forgets the past. In South-West Africa, while the whites bicker over official languages and other trifles, all the while waiting for Europe and the Union to act, the natives revive bitter memories, for it must be remembered that there are men and women living to-day in those native reserves—and even in the huts around Windhoek—who experienced what the Kalahari desert can do to those unfortunates who are driven into its wastes under the extermination order of a white administration. It was in 1906 that the remnants of the Herero nation came back out of the desert. Can any people forget such an experience in a mere thirty years?

As recently as September, 1935, a South African politician, Mr. Pirow, declared that the incorporation of South-West Africa with the Union would not take place without consultation *with Germany*. I am neither a professional politician, nor an economist, but it seems to me that the concluding words should read—"without consultation with the natives."

I read something else into that hotel proprietor's words, concurring as they did with what was said by so many others throughout the territory, and I set it down here merely as a personal judgment.

Nazi Germany has proved that the science of propaganda is developed to an astounding degree among her agents. Frustrated in efforts for the Nazification of the territory through the medium of the schools, the youth movements, and other political organizations, I am of the opinion that attention was turned to the feeling of uncertainty and stagnation among the settlers. This generally voiced apathy—"anything, return to Germany, would be better than the present stagnation . . ."—suggests that the feeling of uncertainty about the future is being guided by skilful string-pulling, fostered and fomented, until, in the end, it may decide the issue at stake.

"We need capital for expansion! We cannot obtain it in our present state! Settle our future—let us go to Germany if the Union will not have us!" These "slogans," coupled with the ignorance of South-West African affairs betrayed in the Union—not only by the man in the street, with his warnings of "nothing but a slag heap," but by politicians who speak of "a land fit only for Bushmen and baboons"—play into the hands

of Germany, as did the Cape Government in the days of the original German annexation.

Because of the past, coupled with what is known of German methods of Nazification within Germany in recent years, I state here at Windhoek, half-way through my trek, that because of the natives who originally settled the land, the territory can never be returned to Germany. The economic needs of a European state and the exigencies of international politics must not be allowed to form the excuse for betraying simple people. They should not even be allowed to fear for a moment that such a betrayal is likely to happen. I came to the territory expecting to learn most from such whites as I met, but the essential fact which must govern South-West Africa's future is found in the poorest native hut. Nazi propaganda, Union procrastination, the bickerings of politicians and economists must all sink into insignificance before the memories of those simple people.

CHAPTER X

THE UNTAMABLE

I

BEYOND Windhoek I made another detour, for I wanted, if possible, to meet some of those shy, elusive nomads, the Bushmen, and I had heard that there are a number in the region of Gobabis. But this strange survival of an almost prehistoric race is dwindling fast. There are probably not many more than 5000 left in existence.

It was on my way to search out the Bushmen that Sir Walter and I almost came to the parting of the ways. I left the bicycle propped against a tree while I retired into a thicket for domestic reasons, and suddenly I heard the familiar clatter of kettle and other equipment hitting the dust.

"Curse! He's fallen over again," I thought, and almost left it at that. But, on second thoughts, I pulled some bushes aside and looked out.

Ten million devils! There was a gawky native youngster, dressed in the cast-offs from many wardrobes, furtively swinging his long, scraggy leg astride Sir Walter! Where the lad came from I cannot say. The country had seemed as depopulated as the summit of Mount Everest a moment before. But that did not alter the fact that my transport and all my worldly goods

were on the point of departure to some destination unknown, in company with a scraggy, coffee-coloured brigand.

My shout must have carried almost back to Windhoek. I bounded up and burst through the bushes. I was sadly handicapped by the fact that there was no time to fasten a belt, so I had to clutch my shorts with one hand, presenting a very undignified, possibly comic appearance, but I did manage to snatch up a rock about the size of a baby's head.

The boy instinctively turned round when I yelled, and then tried to get away in a hurry. Two fatal mistakes to make when astride Sir Walter. I knew then that victory was mine. The handle-bars simply swung round in an uncontrollable half-circle and the bicycle subsided again. The bandit leapt clear with ape-like agility, but—contrary to general belief—I find that there is nothing like a mixture of rage and emergency to direct my aim. That stone bounced off his head in an astonishing fashion.

I believe it is a scientific fact that the native skull is thick ; that lad's must have been made of concrete. I was acutely apprehensive the instant I realized that the stone could not miss its mark. I expected the skull to crush like an egg-shell, and I regretted my fury. I was undoubtedly guilty of deliberate murder, for I threw that stone with no thought for the consequences. . . . Anyway, I need not have let it worry me, for that bandit ran much too fast and straight for a man with a shattered skull, and I should not be at all surprised if he is still running now. If he isn't, he is liable to start off again any time he sees a bicycle.

He was not a Bushman. There is no mistaking these little people when one meets them. They are probably the smallest people in the world, pure-blooded males seldom attaining a height of five feet, but their skinny, delicately-formed, little frames are as wiry as those of the monkeys that they resemble so closely at first sight. But the Bushman is no baboon ; this strange, wild hunter, who lives where no other race could survive, has more culture than the Bantus who drove him into the wilderness. He has a store of spoken literature, legend and history, and his paintings on the rock walls of caves are one of the wonders of Africa. Scientists squabble over those vivid pictures of grotesque animals and men ; tourists travel miles to see them ; they have become objects of national pride—"Come to South Africa to see the Bushman paintings !"

But what of the people who executed those strange pictures ? They have been ruthlessly hunted to the verge of extermination for generations, so that to-day there are probably less than five thousand of them in existence, and there would not be those if it were not for their courage and adaptability, their supreme skill as hunters, and their incredible powers of endurance.

Originally they seem to have come from somewhere up around Lake Tanganyika, but the horde of Bantus descending southwards drove the little men ahead of them, thereby making the Bushman the first settlers in the Cape, long before Van Riebeck and his Dutch burghers arrived. By the time the Dutch had founded their settlement the Hottentots had followed on the heels of the Bushmen and driven them out into the desert.

There they live to-day, in odd corners of the



Photo, E. N. A.

A BUSHMAN'S HOME IN A WHITE ANT-HILL

Kalahari and Namib deserts, clinging to the primitive conditions of the past, and existing on a staple diet of roots, nuts, berries and fruits, with snakes and lizards as delicacies. Their lives are one long battle against nature for food and water. Their homes are, at most, crude shelters of branches covered with skins or grass, and often they do no more than dig a hole in the ground and lie in it, with the sky for their roof. They rely almost entirely upon a fire for warmth, and I have met Bushmen with terrible scars on their scrawny bodies, caused by lying too close to the blaze, or rolling into the embers.

To this day they live the same roving, primitive life, a ceaseless struggle for existence, like the wild animals they hunt. They have no domestic animals, except the dog which aids their hunting ; their weapons are home-made ; they go almost entirely naked ; they grow no crops ; until recently their only water-bottle was the shell of an ostrich-egg ; and from birth till death they never wash. I remember in this connection a Bushman in the Kalahari who had committed some minor crime. The policeman who captured him, having long experience of these queer little folk, evolved a new method of showing him the error of his ways—*he gave him a bath !* That Bushman never repeated his offence.

The march of time has taken a detour round them, leaving them as they were in the spacious days before white colonization, when they roved undisputed over all Southern Africa—kings of all they surveyed, masters of all that land which has proved its wealth in gold and diamonds, and the riches the farmer cultivates.

But white man's conception of wealth means

nothing to the Bushman. He is still essentially simple, gauging men only by their ability to win a living out of a slag heap, choosing a chief because of his hunting prowess, winning a wife by killing some savage animal for her, and thereby proving himself a man.

When the Bushmen first saw ox-wagons they thought them some new form of animal, for there were their tracks in the sand; and the small wagons were the children of the large.

Queer little folk, the Bushmen; wild and seemingly untamable as their desert home, but with likeable characteristics that are missing in many a more civilized race. In appearance they are diminutive in every feature—pocket-sized men. Their hair grows in scattered, closely curled tufts on heads which the scientists declare retain the shape of those of European children at birth. Their faces are equally child-like, being flat, with broad, indeterminate nose, pouting lips, and a little, pointed chin, while other features are the tiny ears and bulging brows.

They are like children who never grow up. Myriad wrinkles spread like a map of a busy railway junction all over their faces as the years go by, but still they retain a mischievous, inquisitive, child-like appearance. All the rigours of their desperately hard struggle for existence never succeed in robbing them of that air of eternal youth.

They are as inquisitive and mischievous as children, gathering eagerly around anything strange, peering and pointing, but inherently polite. They love singing and dancing, and are gay little folk, although life for them is a stern business. Food and drink must be found day by

day, and as they hunt, so have they been hunted. Incredible though it may sound, less than thirty years ago Bushmen-hunting parties were organized in South-West Africa, and white men would boast of bags of so many Bushmen !

Even to-day, although scientists are seeking to preserve these relics of primitive life, the Bushmen seem to rank lower than wild animals in the estimation of statesmen, for the establishment of a vast game reserve in the Kalahari Desert denies the Bushmen the legal opportunity to hunt the meat they need, so that it would seem that the Game Laws, so necessary to preserve one form of African wild life, will prove the final nail in the coffin of another—for if he cannot hunt, the Bushman must die ; and that is what he is doing—dying out, all too fast.

It is the Bushman who believes that the moon is a piece of bullock's hide which someone has thrown into the sky, and that the stars are lumps of food. They say that the wind is a person who can change himself into a bird. He lives in a great cave in the mountains and goes out each day to find his food. They tell of an ancestor who saw the wind one day and threw a stone at it. Bird and stone burst, raising a terrible dust in a whirl of wind, which convinced him of the truth that the " bird " was the wind in disguise.

They have their own version of the story of how man came to lose immortality, of which I have already given the Hottentot account.

They say that in the beginning there was Urexhwa, and he created man and woman. Then, as an example to his new creations, he took to himself a wife. Either he picked badly, or this was another lesson for the people—the woman

fell sick. So Urexhwa left her in the cave and journeyed to a secret place to fetch medicines.

"Should the woman die while I am away, you must not touch her," he told the people. "I shall attend to her on my return."

The woman died, and, unfortunately, Urexhwa was delayed on his journey, so that the corpse began to make its presence in the cave objectionable. The people bore with it until they were disgusted with it ; then they buried it.

When Urexhwa returned he found what they had done, and he told them angrily that if they had only obeyed him, he would have raised the woman from the dead, and would have given them the power to live again after death. Now they must suffer for their disobedience. When man died he would remain dead.

Then Urexhwa left the disobedient people and climbed into the sky. When thunder rumbles the Bushmen say that it is the voice of Urexhwa ; and they say that he passes across the sky as a bright light, which suggests that the whole story is founded on their natural awe of lightning, or meteors, or both.

Their folk-lore (the most extensive of all among native races in Southern Africa) is a never-ending source of interest. Their imagination is so prolific for so primitive a people, their conception of matters beyond their ken so simple, and yet with its own peculiar wisdom. Naturally the witch-doctor with his dark magic plays an important part in their lives. They call him the *shaman*, and he is the real autocrat of their community, for he is supposed to doctor their ills, foretell the future, confound their enemies, direct them by occult powers to the best hunting grounds, and

bring rain. He shoulders this large parcel of responsibilities without hesitation, for his belief in his own powers is absolute.

The principal tools of this magician's trade are the bones, but no occult powers are claimed for those on their own. First they must be inspired by rubbing with a glowing ember from the fire, and by being massaged against the doctor's scalp.

It is an eerie, rather thrilling business (and no small honour) to be present at a seance. The "table" of sand on which the bones are to be thrown must be smooth and with no trace of litter upon it. The *shaman* attends to that, looking like a grotesque child playing on the sea-shore.

Then, like an American negro playing "craps," he shakes up the bones in his hand and flings them down. Prosperity (and for the Bushman that means a surfeit of meat and water), health, happiness, all depend on how those bones fall with relation to each other. The throw is usually repeated many times before the doctor elucidates; and then—well, no law known to Bushmen can gainsay the oracle. I know of a youngster in the prime of life who was told by the *shaman* that he would die within a certain period. That lad laid down and prepared for death. A white doctor heard of the case and insisted on examining the patient. He pronounced him as organically sound as the proverbial bell; but the lad died within the stipulated time.

Not magic—suggestion—perhaps; but the incident serves to show how absolute is the power of those bones.

The *shaman* also throws the bones to locate game, but he further assists the hunters by blowing special magical powder into the air "to summon

the meat " ; and it is his job to mix the poison which is applied to the deadly tips of the diminutive arrows. Experts differ about the actual ingredients of this poison, so it seems most probable that there are several. A small grub, cooked and then ground into fine powder, is one, but extracts of snake poison and the milky juice of the euphorbia are also used. With these tiny, frail arrows, fashioned from reeds, the little people bring down the largest antelopes, and in the past have been known successfully to tackle elephant.

The Bushman is in a class by himself as a tracker, for his existence depends upon his skill. It is no unusual thing for a hunter to run for days on end along the trail of his quarry, covering incredible distances, while his wife and family follow his tracks at their own gait. When a kill is made all feast on the spot, gorging themselves until the meat has gone. Then they sleep and laze, until pangs of hunger force them to hunt again. They are entirely improvident, giving no thought to saving for to-morrow.

Their skinny, famished-looking dogs are as fearless as their masters, recklessly giving battle to such experienced killers as leopards, and scarcely one of the collection of savage, eternally hungry hounds around a Bushman's werf seems unmarked by hideous scars of old battles.

Such are the Bushmen—creatures of the wild ; untamed—I almost hope untamable, for they are a survival of man before civilization laid its heavy hand upon him.

II

One feature of Bushman existence is of importance with regard to the main purpose of my trek through South-West Africa. The Bushman probably gives no thought to the possibility of the return to power of the Germans ; for him there is always the desert ; but one aspect of his contact with the Germans who formerly colonized the country is not forgotten.

I have already indicated that the Bushman wins his bride by performing some feat of hunting prowess or personal bravery. He seldom has more than one wife because every extra mouth to feed is a problem in such an existence as his, so—bearing in mind the way he won her, and the fact that they strive together against all the forces of nature in their battle for existence, sharing fairly the scanty food (and remembering that the woman does all menial work for him, building his shelter, such as it is, and collecting the berries and roots, leaving him to devote his attention to hunting) she is naturally precious. She is his mate in the full sense of the word.

And yet, here are extracts from the statement under oath of Johannes Kruger, "an intelligent Cape Bastard" (a statement which is supported by the evidence of missionaries, German officials and natives) :¹

" . . . As a rule a Bushman only has one wife. If she is barren he may take another, but never has more than two. The majority of the Bushmen

¹ The full statement will be found in "The Report on the Natives of South-West Africa and their Treatment by Germany," page 148.

have only one wife. They are extremely fond of their women, whom they treat well. The Germans began to take their wives away from the Bushmen and made concubines of them. The whole district is full of these German-Bushwomen cross-breeds. This conduct annoyed and irritated the Bushmen more than anything else. . . ."

At the present day the Bushmen are losing their fear of white men. They are still shy and elusive, hiding much in the fastnesses of the desert, but they seem to have decided that every white man is not a potential enemy. A number of them were even persuaded to travel to Johannesburg to be exhibited at the Empire Exhibition. This was a triumph of patience and tact on the part of the white men concerned ; but incidents which happened between 1890 and 1914 leave a scar that one lifetime cannot wipe out. Even a wild desert man has a longer memory than that ; only a politician can conveniently forget.

CHAPTER XI

THE LAND WITH THE WRONG NAME

I

THERE is a libellous story in circulation to the effect that I once wrote to the chemist to explain why I could not pay his bill, and received back The Mixture (to be taken three times a day), The Lotion (for external application only), and my "prescription" for future reference. This libel comes to mind when I look through the notes that I made on my way north.

The majority were typewritten, hammered out on the machine in all sorts of queer places and postures, but here and there are scraps of paper covered with hieroglyphics. I sat in the shade of an ant-heap and wrote down why Damaraland should have been named something entirely different, while I waited to see if the tyre I had just patched subsided or not. The note is before me on the table. So far as I can make out from it, a word which looks like "damn" occurs at frequent intervals, and there are references to "cattle Damns," "Corn Damns," and "Dirty Damns," with a grapevine pattern of squiggles linking them; but fortunately my memory is better than my writing.

The country north of Windhoek is called Damaraland on the map, but this is only because

early travellers in the region either wrote as badly as I do, or were congenitally hard of hearing. The name should be Hereroland, for the Hereros are the folk who live here. The real Damaras are called "the Dung people" and have to live wherever anyone will let them.

The confusion was caused by the Hottentot name for their Bantu neighbours, which was Daman (those "damns" of mine). They called the Hereros the Cattle-Daman, and the Berg Damaras the Dung-Daman (or, as missionaries translate it more politely—"the Dirty Daman"). Everybody seems to have called the latter insulting names, and the scorn which a South African, white or coloured, puts into the name by which the Damaras are most usually known to-day—"Klip-Kafirs"—has to be heard to be appreciated.

I met them throughout my journey, these detribalized servants of whoever will employ them. It was a Klip-Kafir who found me sitting at the roadside in a dazed condition after misjudging the bend at the bottom of a hill. I did not pause to consider how dirty and degenerate he was as he fetched water for me, helped me to straighten various parts of Sir Walter and collect and load my scattered goods, and beamed all over his face because I rewarded him with a tikkie (three-penny-bit) and some scraps of meat in a bully-beef tin. It was a Klip-Kafir who pushed Sir Walter up a long hill for me; he was walking in the same direction, so offered his services as a matter of course. That is their function in life, and has been for generations, to work for others for whatever wage they can get.

And yet authorities suggest that they were the true aboriginals of the country, flourishing there

before even the Bushmen came into the land, and it is even suggested that they are descendants of Phoenician emigrants who struck south in the days when history was guess-work.

Their language has been lost with the secret of their origin, for they now speak Hottentot, together with a mixture of German, Afrikaans and English words, and not one of the Klip-Kafirs I met could remember a member of his race ever having spoken anything else.

Those that do not live and work at the homes of white men combine in small "family" tribes of ten to forty people, with the oldest man as chief. In some ways their existence then resembles that of the Bushman, but the Klip-Kafir lacks the hunting prowess and endurance of the latter. They eat anything—caterpillars, mice, baboons, offal around a farmer's kraal, the putrefied carcasses of any deceased beast that their noses lead them to. As a result their physique is stunted and inclined to be scraggy, while their black skins and exaggeratedly negro appearance, coupled with the fact that washing is an almost unknown pastime (except where white masters institute it), makes them a sorry sight, a people to be pitied and helped.

But the Hottentots and Hereroes alternately bullied and enslaved the "Dung people," so that, of all native inhabitants of South-West, the Klip-Kafirs must have welcomed the arrival of the white men; but here is a translation of what one of them—Jacob Dikasip¹, a comparatively

¹ The predominance of European names, usually with a Biblical flavour, serves further to indicate how ubiquitous were those missionaries in the early days. Christian names were eagerly accepted by most natives, even if they signified nothing more than something extra to be proud about.

tame and intelligent member of his race—had to say :

“ I have been under German masters and have been brutally treated. I show you the scars on my back from the floggings I have received . . . (he was marked like a zebra) . . . I look old and worn, but it was from the bad treatment. . . . I don't wish to see the Germans ruling this land again—they have been too unjust. They came into the land, and ever since they came natives have been killed and flogged and beaten nearly to death. We never got justice or fair treatment. We cannot agree with the Germans—we hate them. A German had no respect for our women. They have been known to come into the *pontoks* and chase married men out of their beds in order that they might sleep there. We protested, but what could we do? I have seen this sort of thing with my own eyes.”

The same old tale ; and the full details, with proof to back them, could not be published even in these licensed days.

A friend who has been reading this manuscript for me as it goes along, has just said : “ Why bring that up ? ”

I find the answer important. When I set out on this trek I had no intention of raking up the past. It was the future of South-West Africa that interested me ; the future and the present. The only past I contemplated studying was the history of the native people—the usual tapestry of invasions and tribal wars, gradually reduced to a less vivid pattern by the perseverance of shrewd white administrators—glorious stuff, with a real thrill to it, which makes a white man proud of his heritage !

I had no bias against the Germans ; rather was I inclined to agree that they needed room for expansion, even though I did not subscribe to the belief that colonies for Germany would mean prosperity for the Reich and peace in Europe. I had recently returned from a very pleasant trip through Germany in a very old " baby " car, including a long sojourn in Munich. I was impressed by the friendliness of those I met, full of the " all Anglo-Saxons and brothers " spirit. But on my way north from the Orange River my eyes were opened to the truth that it is the past which matters most when considering the future of South-West Africa.

Unsavoury truths must be resurrected, and the proof to substantiate them disinterred from its mausoleum in dry Government publications. Unbelievable stories of brutality and beastiality, told by natives met in the journey, are not evidence. I found it hard to credit them ; had no way of proving them—except by unearthing parallels which have been proved. Those parallels lie no farther afield than in the Foreign Office library in London ; records of most can be obtained for a few shillings through the Stationery Office ; but they are forgotten—as is the fundamental truth they go to prove—that a streak of barbaric cruelty and lust in the make-up of the German makes him unsuitable to control natives. Those proofs also show what can be expected if the natives of Africa are ever handed back to the Germans.

My trek, which was to have been so pleasant—the longed-for return to the joys of trekking through a wild and wide land, of chatting with Kafirs in all the simple independence of their

kraals, contented people whose most general complaint would be a stomach-ache (imagined in anticipation of my medicines)—began to take on a nightmare aspect. To the trials of a form of transport which, in the circumstances, was ridiculous, almost tragic, and the dangers of a sparsely inhabited land, with scant water and food, was added mounting horror, as I heard of the sufferings of whole nations of simple people.

It altered the whole motive of my trek. I was not there to test the bicycle as a means of transport in Africa, or to consider the present state of natives and white settlers and their future prospects, or to put on paper the pleasures, thrills and hardships of life on trek. I was there to show the world the past, so that the people of South-West Africa should not suffer that way again in the future.

II

The thickening of the bush beyond Windhoek, and the general improvement in the landscape is most marked. Trees increase in quantity and size, while a notable feature for the rest of my journey to the north were the vast, grotesque ant-heaps. Viewed from the distance these look like long-necked prehistoric animals towering over the surrounding bush, and towards evening in particular, they assume a veritably uncanny appearance, making one think of Conan Doyle's *Lost World*.

These great erections, built by white ants, were often more than twenty feet high, and a strange



A SMALL ANT HEAP

feature of them is that the tip always curls over slightly to point due magnetic north. Their construction is a bit of Nature's magic, and there is something awe-inspiring about them. I passed many which had formed around trees, and the ant-hill had frequently so outstripped the tree as to tower high over its topmost branches.

Whirlwinds were another feature of the journey, which actually I experienced at intervals from the beginning of the trek. Often I would only see them in the distance, moving pillars of dust swirling across country at an astounding speed, creating strange, isolated commotions in the bush—and then disappearing as abruptly and in the same wizardly fashion that they started; but there were occasions when I became involved in the middle of a corkscrew of whirling air. The whole world would be converted into blinding dust, a rushing sound, and the sensation of being plucked in several directions at once. The chin-strap of my helmet would bite into the flesh, as the hat tried to set off on a carefree journey of its own. My shirt would feel as though someone was trying to "skin a rabbit" and pull it off over my head. Astounding draughts and a great deal of dust, would rush up my shorts. Generally I fell over in a heap. Then the wind would pass. Everything would seem unnaturally still, and the only legacy left behind would be enough dust to choke all the vacuum-cleaners in existence. I can guess how the Bushman came to evolve his belief that the wind changed into a bird, and then back again. He must have been aiming a stone at a bird when one of those whirlwinds caught up with him. The bird naturally disappeared in the flurry, and I can imagine the chaos left in

the little man's mind. I once had to look for my tracks to decide in which direction I was travelling before the wind hit me !

Speaking above of the wind rushing up my shorts reminds me of the spider. I do not know where it appeared from. It was not excessively large, as the spiders of this region go (for the farther north I went the more spiders there were, each larger and more malevolent-looking than its predecessors), but it had long acrobatic legs and a red spot on its back. I saw it first on my leg, just below the knee, apparently playing hide and seek among the hairs.

Any violent action tempted disaster when mounted on Sir Walter ; those handle-bars were simply waiting for an excuse to become uncontrollable. But I said " Scat ! " and flipped at my leg.

If " Scat " means run away (I have never been sure what it does mean) that spider obeyed ; but it ran in the wrong direction. It disappeared *up my shorts !*

Was I in a panic ? For an instant of frozen horror I did not know what to do. I believe I stopped breathing. Then I decided that anything was better than suspense. I expected at any moment to feel the worst happen ; and I have seen a thick-skinned Shangaan go out of his mind with the pain caused by the bite of a spider.

For one of the few times on record I dismounted gracefully from Sir Walter. I managed to bring the cycle to a stop and step off very slowly. Then I moved like the wind—those shorts went down around my ankles and were stepped out of in one panic-stricken rush. (It is fortunate spiders don't do these things in populated streets.)

I could see no sign of the brute, but there seemed to be a tickling sensation out of sight, so I ricked my neck trying to look over my shoulder ; but from that day to this I have not seen that spider again.

The humorous side of the incident had its parallel some years ago in India, when my father was beside me in the front seat of a car. We were both wearing open-neck shirts, and he suddenly uttered a sound which it would be unfilial to describe—his cigarette had slipped out of his mouth and disappeared down the opening of his shirt !

So, with various ups and downs, occasional lifts, dreary periods of lonely monotony, when I seemed the only human thing left on earth, I pushed on northwards again. Game was very scarce, water still a serious problem, while Sir Walter became almost hourly more crotchety, so that I realized the parting of the ways could not be far distant. I passed through land over which Hottentot and Herero, Bushman, Klip-Kafir and German had fought, but the tangled grass, the scattered trees and thorn-bush, the sand and stones, alone remained. I came upon some bones in one place—three complete skeletons ; but who can say how those men died—battle, famine, thirst, disease ? These four autocrats of man's destiny hold the secret between them.

I glimpsed men on another occasion—moving shapes, which came to a sudden halt. They stood for an instant like statues, or ant-heaps of an even queerer shape than usual ; then they scattered and disappeared. They were almost completely naked, but too large for Bushmen. Probably Dung-Damans who had reverted to the

state before they learnt to work for white folk, or who had never sampled that experience.

Then I came upon a group of women and experienced one of the most ridiculous shocks imaginable. For those women, black-skinned almost as the proverbial ace of spades, walking sedately along through the sand in a desolate place which had seemed uninhabited, were dressed in gay-coloured frocks cut to a pattern which was fashionable in Europe more than fifty years ago—puffed sleeves, high necks, high, tight waists, bustle effect at the stern, voluminous trailing skirts, and all! When I drew nearer I saw that the closest to me even wore a cameo brooch to complete the picture!

III

The women were intrigued by my appearance. They chattered like magpies and giggled like schoolgirls. When I dismounted from Sir Walter one of them turned tail and fled, making a high-pitched, clucking sound reminiscent of a hen which has done its duty by the poultry-farmer. The others laughed at her panic. With their Victorian finery they seemed to have acquired something of the poise of that "spacious" period. Even the giggle brought memories of coy heroines in the literature of the '80's; but most of all, I was reminded of a great-aunt, by whose bathchair I have toddled many leagues in days before I could spell Africa.

Perhaps it was the memory of that grand, autocratic old lady, who ruled a certain small boy with a rod of iron, to his lasting benefit,



MODERN HERERO WOMEN IN THEIR ANOMALOUS FINERY

and acted as counsellor and confederate to three generations, that made me positively bashful on first meeting those Herero women. I was reminded too vividly, the intervening years slipping away as though they had never existed, of a figure smothered in clothes cut to that peculiar, antique pattern, of a rubber-shod stick (relic of a hunting accident) which would point accusingly at me, while a voice said: "Charles!——" (Only that great-aunt ever called me by that name, and a guilty conscience generally made my courage ooze out through my boots at the sound).

Queer memories to have revived in the heart of Africa. The old lady has been dead for many years. No longer does her bathchair bring her to tea (with sufficient provender aboard to provide twenty teas for twenty people), or her letters link together a family which has always been scattered over the map. But I will vow that in South-West Africa I trembled in anticipation of hearing again across the years the dreaded: "Charles, what have you been doing now? I can see by your face——"

By the time I had brought my mind back to the present the women had stopped giggling and were waiting for me to say something. One of them could speak quite a bit of English, so I was saved my usual ungrammatical floundering. I discovered that I was not far from Okahandja, the "great place" of the Hereros, formerly the capital of Kamaherero, the chief who first welded them together into a nation.

Another, perhaps the most vital streak of native life in South-West Africa, was unfolded before me. Here, at first sight, it seemed that I had found

what I was seeking: a race comparable with the Zulu, virile, handsome, proud and aloof, aristocrats of their kind. The Hereros have the pride and the aloof air, and in looks they bear a distinct resemblance to the Zulu, but there it ends. In many ways they are unique, their beliefs the most interesting of any that I have come across among African people.

Two factors combine to form the base of their beliefs and the whole structure of their organization. The fundamentals of life for the Herero are his cattle and his women.

This is explained by their story of the Creation. They believe in a paramount God, the Great Magician, who created men and women and all animals out of the Omborombonga tree. But at that time light had not been created, so those Adams and Eves were in complete darkness, which terrified them. Together with the animals they pressed against the tree and wept.

The original ancestor of the stupid Berg Damaras (Klip-Kafirs—those unfortunate folk who have always been in the wrong) lit a fire. The sudden light was as terrifying as the darkness had been; even more so for such animals as the lion, the leopard, and the elephant, who ran away into the darkness, and have remained wild and afraid of fire ever since; but the horses, the cattle, the goats and the sheep, all those animals which now we call domestic, only crowded closer around the people by the tree.

The people recovered their courage in the light, and decided to divide the domestic animals among them; and it was then that the father and mother of the Hereros took possession of the bull and the cow. The other people protested,

but the Herero Adam and Eve held to what they had taken, with the result that cattle have always been more than beasts of the field to the Herero. They are the foundation of his religion, entrusted to him for all time by the Omborombonga tree in the beginning.

It is imperative to bear this in mind when considering the problems, past, present and future, of the Herero. The cattle are *essential* to him, not merely as a rancher, but on account of their fundamental bearing on his religion. He divides them into three classes—Sacred cattle, which cannot be disposed of in any way even by the chief; cattle which are the joint property of a family group; and privately-owned cattle, the property of individuals.

So bound up in every aspect of his life are the Herero's cattle that a calf is presented to a child at birth, and the christening ceremony includes the placing of the infant's hand upon the animal's head. At death the skin of his favourite ox forms his shroud, while the pick of his private herd is killed beside his grave, so as to accompany him into the next world.

The other feature which makes the Herero unique among Bantu races is his treatment of his womenfolk. This also springs from that story of the Creation. Among the Bantus the women's lot has always been that of the drudge. She does most of the hard work, while her man divides his time between hunting, fishing, and loitering in the sun. But the Herero woman performs no labour beyond milking the cattle and attending to the children. Her position is more that of the Eastern beauty, the plaything and pet of her lord. No Herero will break an oath

sworn "by my mother's hood," or "by my mother's tears," and it is the chief's principal wife, or her eldest daughter, who alone tends the holy fire, which burns in their "great place" and must never be allowed to die out.

The explanation of the women's unusual position in the Herero scheme of things lies in the belief that those original ancestors by the Omborombonga tree gave birth only to daughters, in whom, however, was propagated the next generation by contact with such familiar objects as the sun, the moon, a river, a rock, a tree—the list could be continued almost indefinitely.

In this way the Hereros came into being, each descended from one of those original daughters—descended from a woman only, not from the mating of man and woman (the original Herero Adam and Eve apparently do not count). This belief led to the formation of family clans, tracing their descent back to one of these magical unions, and named after the "father"—the Sun clan, the River clan, the Rock clan, etc.

It is impossible here to do more than scratch the surface of the customs, beliefs and social structure of the Hereros. The subject is vast, with many queer ramifications and details, worthy of a book to itself, and I have not had time to study more than is necessary for my purpose, to uncover those aspects which were largely responsible for the state in which the Herero nation is found to-day. One day perhaps I shall fit together all the fact and fable that floats around, scraps of history and mythology garnered from the natives themselves, and from those missionaries and travellers who studied them before me, and produce the Book of the Herero, presenting

to the world a people who had much in them that was noble, but lacked the grace of stamina.

They were never a robust people, lacking the physique of the Zulu, and their women are generally small and scraggy, or tall, angular and lanky, but their faces retain the stamp of intelligence and breeding. Originally they came from the far north; some authorities say from the region around Lake Tanganyika (the original home of the Bushmen), while others, including Professor Schwarz, toy with the theory that they are Vandals who took the wrong turning and struck south far back in history. We have not the time or the space to weigh the evidence for or against any of these theories, or to propose any fresh ones, but it is an established fact that their first settlement in South-West was in the north-west, the Kaokoveld—that strange stretch of grotesque wilderness which is still closed to white men, where roam some of the finest specimens of wild animal life left in existence.

When the main body began to spread south, some of the Hereros remained west of the Etosha Pan, but degenerated fast. They are there to this day, and still go by the name their scornful relations gave them—Ovatjimba—The Beggars. All were scattered, independent tribes until Kama-harero assumed the title of paramount chief and formed them into one nation just before the German annexation of the territory.

The missionaries, from the earliest days, expressed great admiration for them, specifying their self-sacrificing care of their cattle and their love of their children. They proved themselves brave, indomitable warriors in their wars against the invading Hottentots, in connection with

which it must be remembered that the Orlam freebooters considered cattle-stealing a pastime. But these were such wars as the Herero was brought up to wage in protection of his herds and his lands.

The struggle against the Germans was an entirely different matter. Trouble began before the annexation, for the German traders took advantage of the simplicity of the natives and unhesitatingly swindled them out of such cattle as were used for barter. There is nothing abnormal in that; a certain type of trader of all races throughout history has practised what to him were smart business methods; but to the Herero, loss of cattle meant more than loss of wealth. It touched his religion, the whole basis of his being.

That the Germans were blind to this fact is proved by the writings of Dr. Paul Rohrbach, the accepted oracle of German colonial policy, who says:

"The decision to colonise in South-West Africa could after all mean nothing else but this, namely, that the native tribes would have to give up their lands on which they had previously grazed their stock in order that the white man might have the land for the grazing of his stock. . . ." (*Deutsche Kolonialwirtschaft*, page 286.)

"The chief necessity in the establishment of the new settlers," Rohrbach writes in another place, "was the supply of stock. . . . In addition to breeding stock the future farmer required oxen. The Hereros were also the chief producers of these . . . the trade with the Hereros constituted for the commencing farmer the normal channel through which he could gain possession of the required breeding stock. . . ."

The methods used in the course of that trading are described by many *German* writers, and Captain K. Schwabe of the German Army (in his *Mit Schwert und Pflug*) finds it all very amusing :

“ ‘ How much do you want for the oxen ? ’ says the trader.

“ ‘ Fifty pounds sterling,’ replies the Herero.

“ ‘ Good,’ says the trader, ‘ here you have a coat valued at £30, tobacco worth £20, that is in all £50.’ . . . ”

Most people will admit that similar deals will be found in the records of all colonies. The natives had no sense of values, and there were always sharp traders ready to take advantage of this fact. They reasoned that the old coat, the tobacco, and the rest of the gimcrack junk were worth the £50 to the native ; but in South-West Africa they were striking at the core of the Herero’s social structure. Also, in other colonies, responsible government, as soon as it was established, put an end to such practices.

The German Administration in South-West Africa viewed the traders’ efforts in a different light, as is shown by a letter that von Lindequist, acting Governor (later Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies) wrote to the Imperial Chancellor in Berlin in 1895. The complete letter will be found in the German Records at Windhoek, but here is an extract :

“ Only a continued blood-letting by the German traders . . . will again reduce their cattle to the right proportions and enable the Germans to make use of the right bank of the Nosob. . . . ” (He is referring to the vast herds of Herero cattle

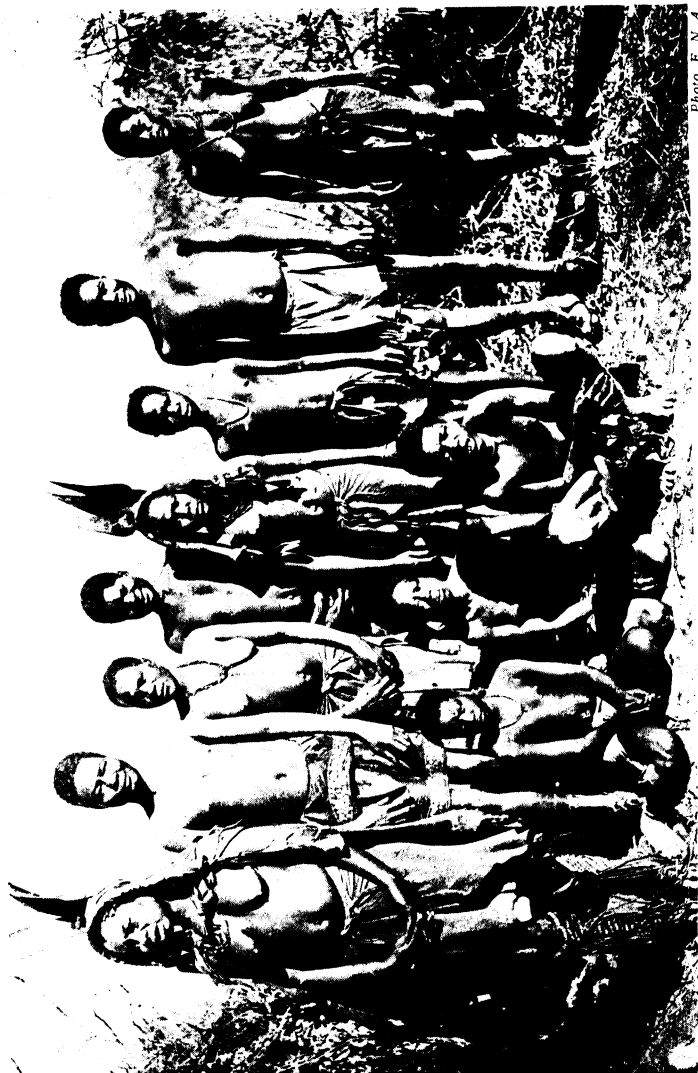
then to be found in the region of the Nosob river.)

The seeds which grew into one of the most tragic phases in the history of the native people of Africa were being sown. The Hereros, who claimed their descent from the man and woman who selected the bull and the cow by the Omborombonga tree, were being shorn of their cattle. Rinderpest had swept through the territory killing thousands of their stock, and now the traders were stealing the rest.

Other factors were at work to fan the embers of rebellion into a blaze. The Germans were not in the Territory for their health ; they wanted land on which to settle, so they took it. That has been the procedure of most colonists, but the German settlers flagrantly ignored the sensibilities of the native population, seeming deliberately to offend against native customs and commit acts which amounted (in the eyes of the natives) to sacrilege. German settlers fixed their own boundaries, as did the Government, and in both cases (as proved by a wealth of evidence) any Herero cattle found within those boundaries were confiscated. Also, no regard was given to either " sacred " cattle, or land which was set aside by the Hereros for shrines.

This rough-shod violating of a nation's faith is mentioned in an affidavit signed by Hosea Mungunda, Herero headman at Windhoek at the time, and witnessed by others :

" Our burial places or graveyards were set aside as sacred and holy ground. We selected groves of green trees (evergreen trees if possible)



Photo, E. N. A.

HERERO BOYS AND GIRLS ATTENDING A GERMAN MISSION SCHOOL AT OKAHANDJA

for our burial places and then all trees there were holy and consecrated. No Herero would dare to damage or cut the trees in a burial place. Our two greatest leaders, Kamaharero and his father Katjamuaha, were buried together near Okahandja in a specially selected burial ground under beautiful green trees on the river bank. The place was fenced off and constantly attended to by the people. The Germans came; they cut down all the beautiful trees and they turned the sacred burial place into a vegetable garden. They appropriated the place as private property and no Herero would go there as he would be prosecuted for trespass. Our chiefs protested to the authorities, but no notice was taken. . . ."

So it went on. The records show continually increasing "collection" of Herero cattle (by "trade" and confiscation), appropriation of land, and violation of native laws and customs. Side by side with these, also on an ascending scale, occurred cases of cruelty, complete disregard for the sanctity of human life (if the individual were black-skinned), miscegenation and rape.

I could repeat stories, the very thought of which are enough to make any normal man feel physically sick. Some of those which can be set down in print were embodied in a report made by the first British administrator of the Territory after the Great War, some extracts from which I give in Appendix B (page 313), but the tales which are still told among the natives, most of them substantiated by the evidence of missionaries and others, including official German records, seem unbelievable, particularly when one remembers that these horrors were perpetrated

by the representatives of a civilized state. The Germans must have realized that no people could remain passive under such a yoke. It would seem that they deliberately exerted pressure until Herero control passed breaking-point.

By January 1904, the entire Herero nation had risen in rebellion. Less than three thousand of them had guns, and most of those weapons were ancient, muzzle-loading, flint-lock blunderbusses. Very few men had as many as twenty cartridges; many had less than five. That was the force which was goaded into defying the whole might of the German Empire.

The generally accepted idea of a native rising is of a horde of blood-lusting savages sweeping over the land and destroying everything in its path; but in the case of the Herero rising the boot was on the other foot. It was the leader of the savages who issued the following instructions to his generals:

"I am the chief leader of the Hereros, Samuel Maherero. I have proclaimed a law and a lawful order and it ordains for all my people that they shall not lay hands on the following: namely, Englishmen, Boers, Bastards, Berg-Damaras, Namas (i.e. Hottentots). We must not lay hands on any of these people. I have taken an oath that their property will not be regarded as enemy property, neither that of the missionaries. Enough!"

It was a Herero chief who took a message to a Dutch woman resident in Omaruru, whose husband was away from home: "I have come to assure you that you and your children will be quite safe in your own home. You are under my protection. Do not go into the German fort.

The Germans are foolish to take their women and children there, as they may be killed by our bullets, and we are not making war on women and children. Keep calm and stay indoors when there is fighting, I assure you my people will do you no harm."

The woman protested that her husband was alone on their distant farm; she feared that he would be murdered by the rebels.

"We are not barbarians" replied the Herero chief. "Your husband is our friend; he is not a German. I have already sent a special messenger to him to tell him he is under my protection as long as he remains quietly on his farm. His cattle and sheep are safe also. *In order not to inconvenience your husband, I have specially ordered my people who are working for him to remain there and do their work loyally until I send further instructions.*

Even the German governor, Leutwein, confirms this chivalrous behaviour: "It seems to have been the definite intention of the Herero leaders to protect all women and children. . . ."

In this way, passing resolutions to safeguard the property of neutrals and to ensure the safety of women and children, the Hereros started upon their forlorn effort to drive their enemies back into the sea. It was foredoomed to failure. The extermination order was issued by the German General, von Trotha, and duly carried out. The terms of the *Vernichtungs Befehl* were that no Herero, man, woman, or suckling babe, was to receive mercy or quarter.

"Kill every one of them," said von Trotha, "and take no prisoners."

Before this order was passed the Hereros were virtually defeated. Thousands had been killed in battle, and all that remained were those who hid in the deserts ; but the German general had no intention of accepting their surrender. In his report to Berlin (as reported by Rohrbach) he said : " That the making of terms with the Hereros was impossible, seeing that their chiefs had nearly all fled, or through their misdeeds during the rebellion had rendered themselves so liable that the German Government could not treat with them. In addition to this he regarded the acceptance of a more or less voluntary surrender as a possible means of building up the old tribal organizations again and, as such, it would be a great political mistake. . . . "

The " war " dragged on through 1904, through 1905, into 1906, when Leutwein wrote : " At a cost of several hundred millions of marks and several thousand German soldiers, we have, of the three business assets of the Protectorate—mining, farming, and native labour—destroyed the second entirely and two-thirds of the last. What is, however, more blameworthy, is the fact that with all our sacrifices we have, up to to-day (March 1906), not been able fully to restore peace again."

Von Trotha had relinquished his task by then, for he was relieved at the end of 1905, by which time about 15,000 starving fugitives were all that remained of the Herero nation. It was then that an amnesty proclamation was made by von Lindequist, who succeeded him. The Hottentots had risen in sympathy with their old enemies, and because of the outrages they also suffered from the Germans, and they also were scattered as

fugitives. The Germans considered that they were crushed, so the proclamation was addressed to the Hereros alone.

Here it is, word for word ; let it speak for itself :

“ Hereros ! His Majesty the Emperor of Germany, the high Lord Protector of this land, has graciously nominated me Governor of this Land a few days after General von Trotha, who commanded the German troops against you, returned to Germany. His departure means that the war will now cease.

“ Hereros ! You know me ! Formerly I was for five years in this land as Imperial Judge, and, as Assessor and Councillor, the representative of Governor Leutwein in the days when Manasse of Omaruru and Kambazembi of Waterberg, who were always loyal supporters of mine, still lived.

“ It is my desire that the Rebellion which your Chiefs and Headmen (and the children who followed them) so wickedly began and which has desolated the land should now come to an end, so that Peace and Order may again rule. I therefore call upon you the Hereros who still are wandering about the veld and in the mountains and who nourish themselves by eating wild roots and by theft. Come and lay down your arms, Hereros ! Thousands of your fellow tribesmen have already surrendered and are being clothed and fed by the Government. I have taken every precaution to ensure that you will be justly treated. That I also personally guarantee to you. Further, it is ordained that from 20th December onwards, that is three weeks from to-day, no Herero habitations will be searched after and taken, as I wish to give you time personally to come in

peacefully to me and surrender yourselves. Come to Omburo and Otjihaenena ! Your missionaries will be sent there by me. They will also take provisions with them, so that your first and great hunger may be appeased. Some small stock will also be left for provisional use of your wives and children in so far as you still possess such for their support. Those who are strong and can work will, when they work with exceptional diligence, receive a small wage. No European soldiers will be stationed at Omburo and Otjihaenena, so that you need not have fear and imagine that further shooting will take place. The sooner you come in and surrender your arms, the sooner can the question of amelioration of the present lot of your captive fellow-tribesmen be considered and their freedom later again given to them. If Omburo and Otjihaenena are too far away, anyone may hand in the arms at any Military Post and surrender there. The soldiers at those stations will not shoot either. In addition, the soldiers escorting the transport and travelling through the land will not shoot at you as long as you attempt nothing hostile towards them. Therefore do not be afraid of them when you see them. So come quickly in Hereros, before it is too late. In Namaland also there will soon be quiet, as Hendrik Witbooi has been killed by a German bullet and Samuel Isaac has surrendered and is in our hands."

This proclamation officially ended the rebellion, and most of the surviving Hereros surrendered, creeping in from the desert—"people like broomsticks . . . so thin that one could see through their bones"—but it took another year to persuade

all the Hereros and Hottentots to surrender finally.

And what happened after surrender? Sworn statements from white men and natives show how the unfortunate, famine-wrecked people were herded into prison camps, forced to work on the railway at manual labour, which would have proved excessive to men in prime health, insulted, flogged, murdered :

“ When our women were prisoners on the railway work they were compelled to cohabit with soldiers and white railway workers. The fact that a woman was married was no protection. Young girls were raped and very badly used. They were taken out of the compounds into the bush and there assaulted. . . . ” (Traugott Tjienda, Headman of the Hereros at Tsumeb.)

“ The prisoners, Hereros and Hottentots, mostly women, and all in a terribly emaciated condition, were imprisoned on an island adjoining Luderitzbucht. The mortality amongst the prisoners was excessive, funerals taking place at the rate of ten to fifteen daily. Many are said to have attempted escape by swimming, and I have seen corpses of women prisoners washed up on the beach. . . . One corpse, I remember, was that of a young woman with practically fleshless limbs, whose breasts had been eaten by jackals. . . . ” (Leslie Cruikshank Bartlet, an English resident of the Territory.)

“ I was made to work on the Otavi line which was being built. We were not paid for our work, we were regarded as prisoners. . . . As our people came in from the bush they were made to work at once; they were merely skin and bones, so thin

that one could see through their bones—they looked like broom-sticks. Bad as they were, they were made to work; and whether they worked or were lazy they were repeatedly sjambokked by the German overseers. The soldiers guarded us at night in big compounds made of thorn-bushes. I had 528 people, all Hereros, in my work party. Of these 148 died while working on the line. . . ." (Traugott Tjienda, Headman at Tsumeb.)

So the Germans succeeded in their object. In the words of their own Professor Bonn, speaking to the Royal Colonial Institute in 1914: "We solved the native problem by smashing tribal life and creating a scarcity of labour. We tried to assume to ourselves the functions of Providence. . . . We succeeded in breaking up the native tribes, but we have not yet succeeded in creating a new Germany."

All that they succeeded in doing was leaving a legacy of indelible memories in the native mind, which must not be overlooked by the whites responsible to-day for the future of the non-European peoples of South-West Africa.

IV

And what of the Herero to-day? These women in their anomalous finery; their menfolk and children. I have uncovered the past of the Herero; what of his present and future? The truth about the present was not easy to find, for I found male Hereros inclined to be sullen and

uncommunicative. When they said much, nine words out of a dozen concerned vague, discontented accounts of matters of little real importance, and it was necessary to seek grains of useful material in all this chaff. Most of the Hereros within the Police Zone live on reserves, and they do not seem to like white visitors. Their dogs hate them ! I take back all I have said about the mongrels at Kalabas Kraal ; they were lap-dogs compared with the horde of starved-looking brutes with which I became involved at various times in Hereroland. Even the wild dogs which occasionally disturbed my rest at night were little more advanced in ferocity than some of the Herero pets.

The Herero to-day is in a state of transition. In 1907 the Germans prohibited the natives of South-West Africa from owning cattle. From the end of the rebellion to 1914 they were scattered over the country, working for the white men on farms and in towns. The loss of their cattle destroyed the whole structure of their tribal life, so that, naturally, they became " as ships without rudders." They had lost the outward and visible sign of their faith, and had nothing to put in its place.

Many turned to Christianity, but others sought relief by adopting as many of the vices of civilization as could be picked up during their enforced contact with white men. They demonstrated their lack of stamina, and did what many other men of all races have done, when haunted by bitter memories, robbed of faith, and cast adrift in a strange world—they threw over all moral restraint. Without the influences of tribal associations, communal life and laws, religious taboos,

and the rest of the complicated structure of native life in its natural surroundings, they let themselves sink. They were crushed; what could it matter what became of them? The spirit of the Herero passed away with his cattle.

The new Administration set aside reserves for them, spending in one area alone more than £7000 on bore-holes, and gave all possible assistance for the building up of new herds. Already the Herero is regaining that foundation of his faith, for in 1935, in the Waterberg alone, the returns show 17,000 head of cattle. But the pride of the Herero is tinged now so much with bitterness that it becomes a menace to himself.

During the years of their exile and detribalization they brooded on their wrongs to such an extent that discontent became a disease. Together with the bad habits they learned, they cannot shake it off. The men sit and sulk in the reserves. Their sloth may be excused as a period of rest after all that they have suffered, and undermined stamina may have much to do with it, but they make little effort to help themselves. As they again own cattle they have recovered their religion, so they are averse to having missionaries in the reserves. For the same reason, until 1936, they had no school, and the Herero school in the Aminuis Reserve is purely experimental. Although the chief was persuaded to agree to its foundation, the majority of the natives view it with suspicion.

But the real trouble with the Herero to-day is directly traceable to that story of the Creation by the Omborombonga tree. They protest that they have no money with which to buy clothes and necessities, for they cannot sell their cattle without



Photo by Exclusive News Agency

BUSHMEN GATHERED ROUND A ZEBRA WHICH THEY CHASED FOR AN HOUR

sinning against their faith, because first the "sacred" herds must be stocked. They sit around in idleness in the reserves and grumble about their poverty, while their herds multiply round them.

Meanwhile the women go their independent way. Because of their place in the intricate network of Herero beliefs, the men have no control over them. During their bondage under the Germans they also acquired habits forbidden under tribal law, and their moral fibre was weakened. It is no exaggeration to say that the majority of the Herero women—those beautifully dressed creatures in their anomalous finery—are virtually prostitutes.

To obtain that finery (cut to patterns introduced by missionaries more than fifty years ago) a large number of them go to work without the consent of their menfolk; others visit the nearest location where they will find men of all races with money to spend. Then they take back to their own people, among whom immorality has already left its legacy, a fresh influx of disease, so that to-day the Herero women have, to a large degree, become physically unfit to bear healthy children, or to bear children at all. The ravages of gonorrhœa and syphilis are blatantly visible among them, for their moral stamina seems to have cracked completely.

Unfortunate Hereros, betrayed now by both their cattle and their women!

What of their future? Before any real advancement can be achieved the confidence of this crushed, bitter race must be gained. That is work for men with wisdom gained by long experience of native administration. It will need

patience and tact, and it seems too obvious to be worthy of mention that such work could not start under the handicap of old hatreds. In other words, the Germans could never achieve it. The moral and social regeneration of the Hereros is one of the major problems of South-West Africa; another instance where skilful nursing is required of the administration; a humane task which cannot be assigned to the Germans.

With such problems within its borders, I realized more fully as I went on my way, the reason why South-West is the Cinderella-land of Africa. The Fairy Godmother will need an abnormally efficient wand to change those "rags" into a whole garment, bring health, wealth and prosperity to Cinderella, and enable her to live happy ever after.

CHAPTER XII

A CHANGE OF TRANSPORT AND THE OBEDIENT LIONESS

I

ABOUT a hundred miles north of Windhoek, as that proverbial crow flies, Sir Walter and I came at last to the parting of the ways. Our long partnership, with its ups and downs (in more than one sense), was ended.

It was not the grimy South-West African one-pound note which the man held out that clinched the deal, although the money was welcome. Funds were running low again, I was beginning to see visions of being left "without a feather to fly with," and was once more reduced to intricate calculations in the back of my note-book—"So many pounds represent so many shillings. There are so many miles still to do. Probable daily mileage so much—divide—divide again—allow so much for emergencies, such as another cable home beginning: 'Broke——' Result: a headache!"

No, it was not the money that made me part with Sir Walter. One does not break with a staunch companion for considerations of filthy lucre (and, believe me, that note was filthy!).

The necessity was less obvious and more acute. Time was one factor. Progressive deterioration

of the roads another. The farther north I travelled the more infrequent became the firm stretches on which Sir Walter could travel like a bicycle (most other times he was a cross between a bucking broncho and a ship in a heavy sea).

Also, his idiosyncracies had reached the ultra-damnable stage. The squeak was still with me, but now it sounded like ten million doomed pigs in chorus, with an obligato of grinding, grating sounds included to complete the cacophony. The refrain had changed from the complaining I'm-so-tired-must-you-torment-me-like-this to a heroic, self-sacrificing I'm-dying-pard-push-on-and-leave-me-to-it, or, sometimes, can't-you-leave-a-worn-out-crock-to-die-in-peace. And there came a time when there was no oil to alleviate his sufferings.

I admit that my test of the bicycle as a means of transport in Africa was cruelly severe. Thick sand is an unfair handicap, for the machine naturally skids and slithers in it, and in both the Western Cape and all South-West Africa the sand was ever present. It varied in colour, texture, and the depth of the accumulation in every hollow, but it was sand all the way, and Sir Walter survived it manfully. He survived being dragged over rocks, hauled up one side and thrown down the other, wheeled across acres of loose boulders, forced through thorn-brakes, hauled across dry river-beds, and (I must confess it) kicked and cursed at frequent intervals.

I still believe that the bicycle has not been properly exploited in a country like Africa, particularly in districts where horse-sickness cancels out that form of transport, roads are non-existent, and the price of petrol prohibitive. I

can remember many occasions when I have had to walk miles to do some small job on the farm. The usual procedure was to send a boy ahead with the necessary tools, knowing full well that he will stop to gossip at every wayside kraal and dawdle between whiles. One of these days I must try out a tandem bicycle under such conditions—stick the boy and the tools in the back saddle, and off we go ! A self-contained unit which can make its way along any path, and which can be lifted over places where there is no path.

Many natives all over Africa ride cycles these days, and some are even experimenting with motor cycles. They have a fine natural sense of balance and soon pick up the trick of the machine. They invariably ride too fast, often have vague ideas what the brakes are for, and their greatest joy is to sprinkle the handle-bars with a multiplicity of bells and at least one raucous motor-horn ; but I have not yet heard of either white man or native trying out a tandem. Perhaps I shall be crazy enough at some future date, when the passage of time has dimmed my recollections and cured my bruises, to do a similar trek to my present effort, using a tandem instead of Sir Walter. I doubt it ; but the idea insists on remaining at the back of my mind. There persists in running through my head the sentence : “swooping with the grace of a sea-gull down the long hills, following the winding Kafir trails and game-tracks, penetrating where no car could go, covering twice as much ground in one day as a man on foot. . . .” To which might now be added—taking as many falls as an acrobat, carrying a bicycle about like a fool, and probably breaking one’s neck like a rabbit !

I felt like reciting "The Arab's Farewell to his Steed" when parting with Sir Walter, but was afraid the would-be purchaser might change his mind, and, anyway, I have forgotten how the words go.

The puce-coloured man of mixed blood held out the pound-note and I took it.

Sir Walter's journey to the north was ended. He is likely to spend the rest of his days careering around the neighbourhood of the cluster of huts where I sold him, probably with flat tyres and no oil, until he falls to pieces.

Thinking back I can recapture vividly the variety of emotions I experienced with regard to that bicycle. At first I was doubtful; it seemed so cheap. Would it last out the first hundred miles? Then followed despair because it would not carry all the kit I wanted to take. Later, brief periods of sheer joy (all too brief), when everything went merrily and we bowled along as care-free as any week-end cycling enthusiast in England. Finally, I think of Ambrose's pride at having found the bicycle for me; the resolute adoration that he put into the job of polishing with the materials intended for other purposes. On my return to Capetown I never told Ambrose what actually happened to Sir Walter. Had he known about the puce-coloured gentleman in the patched trousers, I think he would have burst into tears, for I believe he hoped all the time that I was away that I would come riding back on Sir Walter, and that the bicycle would be left with him when I sailed to England. I, also, would have preferred the end to have been like that.

But a puce-coloured man of mixed blood rode

away on Sir Walter, and I grasped my many bundles and staggered along to where I had already begged a lift in a small ox-cart driven by a brother of the bicycle's new owner.

From that moment the whole character of my trek changed. I was no longer independent of such means of transport as South-West provides. As I pushed steadily on to the north I had to jump trains whenever possible, beg lifts in motor cars, lorries and wagons, and walk great distances.

That cart took me all the way to the railway, including a night on the journey (when the owner slept in the hut of a friend, and I—after one sniff inside the low door—curled up in the cart, surrounded by the more natural smell of cow dung). At the railway I had to readjust my kit. I still had many miles to go to reach my goal beyond the police zone in the far north. I must travel fast, and that meant that I must travel light. My kit had to be reduced so that I had little beyond what I stood up in, for in that hot, dry climate I had no intention of emulating the average hiker in England. With their vast rucksacks these folk seem to have the cares of the world on their shoulders, and I can only marvel at their strength and endurance.

The Bushman is the doyen of hikers. With a short knobkerrie, a long bone knife, a bow and arrows, the dried body of a snake (as medicine), a skin bag, and a tin for a kettle, he plunges into the wilderness, leaving Nature and his own skill to provide the rest from day to day.

The haversack that originally carried last-moment essentials had to suffice for the last lap of my journey for my entire wardrobe and commissariat; every form of kit had to be cut

absolutely to the bone so that I could carry the maximum quantity of water. Even so, as days went by, I had cause to think more than once that the lack of water in this land had me licked at last. There were occasions when it would be an exaggeration to say that my daily dose was a teaspoonful. I dug in dry river-beds until I found moisture, my reward generally being a mouthful of grit, a brackish taste, and plenty of unpleasant smell. I tried to remember all sorts of golden rules: "Follow the drift of birds, as they go sooner, or later, to their drinking-place. Birds, pig and cat animals, range nearest to water, antelopes and gazelle farthest away. . . . As tracks gather into a trail and dung droppings increase, the direction points to water. . . ." I even remembered someone having told me that a horse can smell water at three miles, but without a horse that only made me all the more thirsty.

It would take a better descriptive writer than I shall ever be to put down on paper exactly what the mouth, tongue, lips, throat, stomach (upper and lower section), limbs, head, eyes—in fact, the whole man—feels like when the water supply has been reduced below the reasonable minimum. The pity is that one can still think. I remember thinking of all the jokes about plumbers that I have seen in *Punch*, which generally include a flooded bathroom; and I remember on a desert trek a number of years ago, my companion turning to me and croaking, very seriously: "When I was four I knocked over my glass of water at table. My father flogged me. He did right—wasteful little swine—I should've been shot!"

In Northern Damaraland the bush thickens

considerably, for the annual rainfall is double that in the southern part of the territory, but I could count the times I saw surface water on my thumbs. I almost forgot what it was like to see a pool of water and be able to drink my fill, or to have an undisturbed night of complete security.

Animal life increased in quantity and variety, as I pushed on northwards into the wide plains of the Karst region, from which rise the grotesque tumbled masses of the Otavi Mountains. Even in the hills there were sink-holes and caverns, but nowhere a pool of water. Once I heard what I still believe was a babbling brook (and how it babbled !), but I never located the water.

Baboons jeered at me, for they knew where the water was. Father, mother and family popped up along the ridges to enjoy the joke, and barked defiance when I sent an occasional bullet singing over their heads. My shooting was not at fault ; I never shoot a monkey if I can avoid it. I have seen baboons die that way, and it is altogether too human a sight. Also they have a horrible habit of disembowelling themselves in the attempt to tear out the bullet.

They used to do devastating damage to crops on the farm, but we avoided shooting them. Some extravagant genius invented a stunt of leaving copper detonators (such as we used for blasting) spread temptingly at the base of the kopje from which we knew the raiders came. Mr. Monk would see the copper glittering in the sun ; would pick it up, look at it, bite it to sample the taste—finish of Mr. Monk.

A couple of cheetahs came to have a look at me on one occasion when I was scrabbling for water. They looked annoyed, but I think that must be

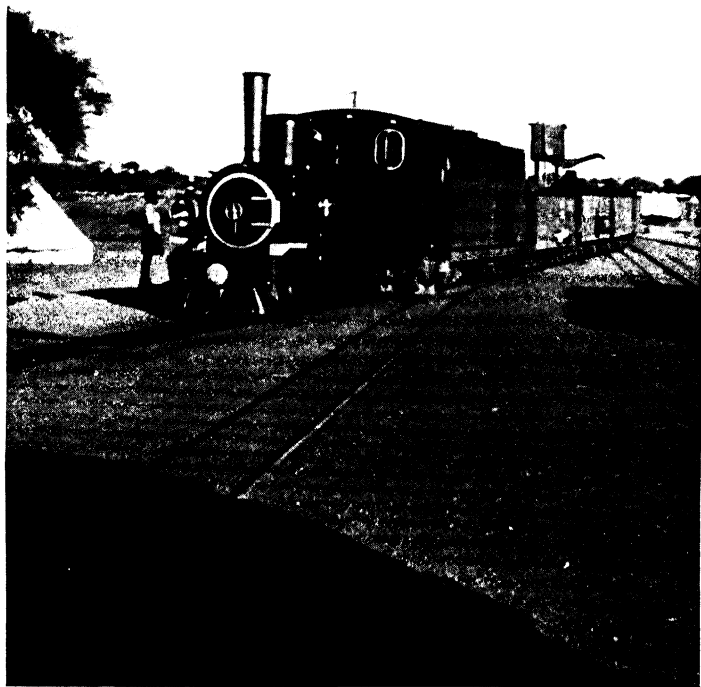
their way of enjoying a good joke. These swift, leopard-like animals (South Africans lump cheetahs and leopards together, and call them "tigers") are all appearance as far as ferocity goes. I threw a handful of sand at my visitors and did not see them again.

The sight of them cheered me immensely, for I reminded myself that cats range closest to water, but their source of supply remained a family secret; I failed to find it.

I have jumped ahead in my narrative to the last lap of my north-bound journey, the suicidal attempt to cross the waterless stretch of practically uninhabited desolation between the railway and the Etosha Pan on the borders of Ovamboland. Between the Waterberg and the starting-point of that trek, my progress had been a kaleidoscopic medley of walking, cadging lifts and travelling on one of the most informally comic railways that I have encountered yet.

This railway branches off the main Walvis-Windhoek-Upington line at Usakos, and is only of two-foot gauge. Measure that out with your hands and you will begin to appreciate how like some ridiculous toy that track looked. Add to that the fact that it runs unfenced through more than two hundred miles of country, that nobody travels on it who has a car or can beg a lift in one, and that to accommodate any reasonable quantity of goods and passengers the rolling-stock has to overlap several feet to each side of the track. Then laugh! I did when I first saw it.

The engines are locally called coffee-kettles, most of them having a conical smoke-stack like an inverted candle-snuffer, and they puff and



THE "COFFEE-POT" ENGINE OF THE 2 FT. GAUGE RAILWAY BETWEEN
OSOKOS AND TSUMEB

pant their way along in a fashion that is peculiarly their own, but they almost invariably reach their objective. Game of various sorts come down to take a look at the train, and wild ostriches race it with a sneer on their disdainful countenances. The passenger accommodation is like the interior of a tram, with a long seat around the sides, and as there is no refreshment-car, travellers either take their own grub and camp out in the compartment, or take advantage of the lengthy pauses at such towns along the route as have hotels. It is not comfortable, but it serves its purpose. I travelled for a stretch of close upon twenty-four hours by that train, on the first stage of my homeward journey, accompanied by Mädchen and Piet, but much happened before that interlude.

The Germans built the railway for the opening up of the country, and its principal purpose has always been to serve the copper mines in the north, but even the Tsumeb Mine, one of the largest in the world, has been closed down for some time, so the train ambled from Usakos to Tsumeb and back twice weekly without any particular motive, except to collect whatsoever freight Providence (in the form of local farmers and traders) provides for it.

Just over a hundred miles west of the junction at Usakos, beyond the sterile strip of the Namib desert, is Walvis Bay, the principal port of the territory, and situated on the only bit of land that the Cape Government deigned to grab when the scramble started at the time of the German annexation. Near Walvis—which, if the projected railway across the Kalahari to Rhodesia ever becomes more than a maze of figures in surveyors' note-books will become one of the most important

ports in Southern Africa, and is already a busy place, with a wharf which will accommodate three liners—is the smart little town of Swakopmund, one of the centres of the German occupation. Swakop, as it is generally called, is earning quite a reputation as a holiday resort, but the sterile surroundings, mile upon mile of sand-dunes stretching away across the Namib desert, are scarcely conducive to the holiday spirit. The German element predominates there, and its glider club has already made history with some remarkable sail-plane flights. Many an ex-soldier will remember it in the days when it was Louis Botha's headquarters during the preliminary stages of the campaign, but few would recognize it now. It has progressed, and many would be disappointed in the search for familiar haunts.

An old pal of mine, who suffers from the name of Gerald, but is not responsible for that, hired a horse at Swakopmund once to ride off the effects of a long sea voyage. The dealer provided him with a stallion with decided opinions of its own, and much happened that was not included in Gerald's schedule, so that he had to walk back to the town. His roving days are over now; he wears a bowler hat and spats; but his former activities included a trip through the Red Sea as a fireman, and he has always said that the stokehold was a refrigerator compared with that desert. His opinions of Swakopmund and district are descriptive and informative, but highly coloured and intensely libellous. Long before I ever contemplated a visit to South-West he and I did a short trek together on the other side of Africa, and he only needed to see a patch of sand to tell me all about Swakopmund.

But to the only Englishman that I met north of Windhoek the little town on the coast was the oasis in the desert of a dreary existence. He used to save up to go to Swakopmund for periodical rest-cures when his nerves proved unequal to the strain of farming in a land which adds its own peculiar quota of trials and tribulations to the farmer's normal overdose.

II

I met a lioness at the top of a ridge. The sun was dropping out of sight and I was at the end of a particularly hard day. I do not know what the lioness had been doing, for it is their normal habit to lie up during the day, so as to be fresh for nocturnal activities, but she had evidently been on the prowl out of hours. The day had been exceptionally hot and the evening brought little in the way of relief.

I climbed the ridge from one side, the lioness from the other, and we met at the top. I was dog-tired and irritable, in the state that I did not care what happened. I had been telling myself that my trip was a crazy attempt at suicide, and that if I had the sense of a jack-rabbit I would turn back and head for the railway and home. Then I breasted the ridge and met her ladyship. No more than ten paces separated us when we both came to an abrupt stop.

We surveyed each other. She looked as hot and irritable as I felt, and, absurdly enough, I felt sorry for her. I do not believe that I even reached for the safety-catch on my rifle, although

I have no doubt that I instinctively went through the necessary motions of preparing to sell my life dearly, and all that sort of thing.

I know that I spoke. To put it mildly, I said : "*Will* you go to hell ! "

And she went ! She sprang lightly aside, and without more than a disdainful look back, disappeared into the thick, seared grass.

Then the reaction set in. The insane impulse, bred of complete weariness, which had made me shout instead of shoot was bolstered by nerves strained unnaturally. I suppose the abrupt relaxing of the tension proved too much. I had to sit down for a moment because my fool legs went weak, and although I could have sworn that there was not a drop of surplus moisture left in me, my face was wet when I wiped it ; and the hand I used shook ridiculously.

I realized then (after I had scrambled up and walked somewhat hastily on—in case the lady indulged the prerogative of her sex and changed her mind) that I had just about tried my endurance to the limit. Muscles and nerves combined were expressing protests.

" Watch yourself, or you'll crack up ! " I repeated foolishly many times, and, although my camp was peaceful enough, I slept badly that night.

The very next morning I shot a magnificent lion not far from the tree where I camped. I had no wish to shoot him, for mine was not a hunting trip, and I could do nothing with the carcass, but he looked hungrily at me and gave no indication of being as obedient as the lady. The shot was a " sitter " and he dropped immediately, crumpling up with surprisingly complete abruptness.

Then an indignant roar from somewhere near at hand, echoing the shot, suggested that friends of the deceased were in the vicinity, so I must admit that—like the small boy who has felled a prominent citizen with a misapplied stone from his catapult—I took to my heels.

All this time I was travelling lighter than ever before—no tent, no blankets (one jersey for night-wear), one tin plate and mug for “skoff,” no change of clothes or boots, not even a spare handkerchief—which state served me in good stead when I considered it wise to run. The rest of my stuff, including the typewriter, I had left down by the railway to be collected on the homeward journey; but I began to wonder if the latter was to be part of the programme after all.

The country in the vicinity of the Etosha Pan is a veritable wonderland of big game (for once that absurd phrase is entirely fitting), while snakes, spiders, and a variety of startling insects—many of nightmare appearance—are also there in profusion. In the space of a few hours I came upon herds of wildebeest—those uncouth, crazy animals, which many hunters declare have maggots on the brain (they certainly behave like it)—zebra, springbok and kudu, while on another occasion a number of giraffe crossed my path in a hurry to get somewhere else. Elephant, black rhinoceros, the true zebra (*equus zebra*), Burchell's zebra, and even the quagga, which was thought to have been exterminated and was formerly reported never to have been seen north of the Vaal river, are to be found in the vicinity of the Etosha Pan. Buffalo, Cape Hartebeest, Blue Wildebeest, duiker, steenbok, springbok, roan, sable, gemsbok, oryx, eland—the list reads like a

sale catalogue for hunters, but the area has been set aside as a game reserve, where specimen heads can only be "shot" by the new form of hunter with a camera for his weapon (complete with telescopic lenses, of course!).

But this is not a hunter's book. It was people that I made my journey to see, and I wanted to complete my survey of conditions in South-West Africa by learning something about the Ovambos, those peculiar people who live beyond the Police Zone.

I was forced to turn back before I had penetrated as far as I originally planned into Ovamboland, because this is forbidden territory for white men, and I did not know that it was necessary to obtain a permit from the administration at Windhoek. I found myself faced with two alternatives: to push on to the Commissioner's headquarters at Ondonga, introduce myself with apologies, and make a belated application for permission to enter the country; or to see what I could and collect all available information in the course of a hurried survey, and then turn back on my tracks.

I fully appreciated the wisdom of the law prohibiting the entrance of white men without permits, for the simple Ovambos would be easy prey for unscrupulous traders, and the Angola border is temptingly close for ivory poachers, who would soon deplete the herds of elephant up that way and smuggle the ivory across into Portuguese territory. The Administration want to prevent, as far as lies in their power, a repetition of what has happened in most other parts of Africa, and to make the contact of the Ovambos with civilization as controlled as possible. I had

no wish to set a bad example by breaking that law.

I had not sought information in Windhoek on the way north because, throughout my journey, I avoided making contact with officials. My movements were almost furtive, for I wanted, above anything else, to avoid any suggestion of "an officially conducted tour." So many people say when a man returns from such a trip as mine: "Of course you saw just what you were supposed to see. *I* know the way these things are worked. You're like a visitor calling at a house and being shown into the drawing-room, where the most presentable of the children, scrubbed and suitably attired for the occasion, are presented to do their parlour tricks. You come away knowing nothing about the real life of that house."

To refute that accusation in advance I kept away from the beaten tracks, as secretive as a conspirator. I will admit that I usually left Sir Walter hidden in the bush before visiting a town, and that I even told astounding whoppers to account for my presence. "I'm browsing round looking for suitable land, thinking of settling here. . . ." "I'm on holiday from the Cape; just a new sort of tourist. . . ."

I apologize to all those who heard my tall stories, but I wanted to learn things without my informant's supply being frozen at the source by the thought: "There's a chiel amang us takin' notes." Also, I did not want to tap streams of biased personal grievances, poured into my ears in the hope of publication.

I decided not to head for the Commissioner and lay my case before him, for that would bring me

into contact with officialdom, and I should most likely have to report at Windhoek on the way back (if I were not marched there under armed guard) to account for myself. Instead, I made up my mind to leave Ovamboland as unobtrusively and swiftly as I had entered there, although I realize that my defence for my inadvertent breaking of the law is exactly on a par with that of the unfortunate girl with the illegitimate baby who said : " Please, sir, it's only a little one ! "

It always seems to me that stray wanderers off the beaten track like myself must be sources of great annoyance to an already overworked Commissioner. We appear suddenly in their territory without rhyme or reason, many of us with vast quantities of gear—cameras, guns, and what-not—and accompanied by strange natives whom we have brought from other districts. " Just having a look round," we say. " Snug show you have here ! Any chance of seeing a war-dance ? " And the Commissioner, whose life is spent preventing anything in the nature of war-dances, strives to be polite while we drink his whisky.

There are some (I plead not guilty to this) who take his hospitality for granted. We ask all sorts of foolish questions that are no business of ours, and all the time that we are in the territory we are a responsibility, for, if we get into trouble or make trouble, the long-suffering Commissioner will have to clear up the mess.

Also, there is a ream of rubbish talked and written about the arrival of a stranger in some isolated place being a joyful happening for those forced to live there. The stranger is more likely to be a disturbing element, throwing out of gear machinery that runs smoothly because all the

cogs have learnt to fit into one another without grating. I know from personal experience that he too often leaves behind an atmosphere of discontent and tension. Loneliness naturally seems more acute, isolation harder to bear, for memories of life beyond exile have been stirred. Also casual statements by a visitor assume exaggerated importance. The stranger is quoted as an authority by some, and scoffed at by others, fresh friction arising to add to that which naturally grows between men forced to live together in unnatural isolation.

But I am straying far off my track again, and once more I cannot blame the compass. I soon realized that a prolonged study of the Ovambos was unnecessary, for although they are attached to South-West Africa, they scarcely belong to it. The chaotic history of the land to the south has hardly touched them. Because of the isolated nature of their country, separated by an uninhabited stretch of difficult country to cross, they have contrived to remain aloof from the reign of terror experienced by the Hottentots and the Hereros.

They resolutely refused to have anything to do with the Germans, and the latter had stirred up sufficient of a hornets' nest about their ears to postpone rousing a new swarm until Hereros and Hottentots were crushed; and the war intervened in time to prevent that happening.

Governor Leutwein admits in his book, when writing of a diplomatic letter he sent to an Ovambo chief, that the chief replied "that all I had written in my letter was very nice, but that, as far as concerned him, Kambonde did not want to see me as long as he lived. Because the Germans

came with friendly words, but once they were there they wished to rule, and that he (the chief) could alone rule in his country."

And yet this same Ovamboland (with an estimated population in 1935 of 107,000) is now controlled by one white Commissioner, with one white assistant and a European clerk. They employ no uniformed police; the entire "force" at the Commissioner's disposal in Ovamboland consisting of about a dozen native messengers.

The Ovambos govern themselves by their own tribal laws, watched over by the Commissioner, who shrewdly oils the cogs to prevent tribal friction, and controls the welfare of the people; and the success of this form of indirect government when applied by a humane Commissioner who knows his job, leading instead of driving, advising instead of commanding, is demonstrated by the comparative prosperity of the Ovambos. Their full enjoyment of their tribal life, their whole appearance, brings more vividly to the mind the state of the Hereros, those relics of German colonization.

"I have no complaints about anything. . . . Since the Union Government has taken this country, we are much more friendly than we used to be. . . . Before, if a man were to visit another one, he had to take with him a knobkerrie and a knife. But to-day we are all good friends, and we do not do that. . . . We are all well, and we are satisfied, and we hope the Union Government is well. . . ." said a prominent Ovambo chief, when questioned about the administration; and a headman said:

"I want to say this. That the Union Government did not force its way into Ovamboland.

They came here on our invitation. . . . It was I who was sent by Mandumi to go to the Union. There was a great famine raging in this country at the time and the road was far. Mandumi said to me, 'It does not matter what happens here, you go and get the Union officers to come here, and you must go even if you die on the road. . . . I do not want to lose my country either to the Portuguese or the Germans. You go and bring these Union People here.' That was in 1915."

The result for the Ovambos has been peace and prosperity, but it must be borne in mind that no white man is permitted to take up land or to trade in Ovamboland. The law is most stringent on the matter of permits to enter Ovamboland, and in 1935 two Europeans were convicted for trespassing there without the necessary permission. The land in that region is some of the best in the territory, so the Administration must be self-sacrificing in the interests of the Ovambos. Would Germany maintain this course? Would Germany nurse the natives occupying potentially rich land and protect them from rapacious traders? It seems more likely that history would repeat itself, substituting Ovambos for Hereros. Germany wants land for the support of Germans, and to provide raw materials; with such avowed motives behind her colonization, and a past record such as is found written in the memories of the natives of South-West Africa, is there any hope of her adopting the role of father, mother, and nursemaid, so necessary for the regeneration of the people of this Cinderella-land?

III

The Ovambo are Bantus, about whose origin there is much difference of opinion. Professor Schwarz, who studied them closely, links them with the Hereros, and is of the opinion that both originally descended from the Vandals. They are a fine-looking people, tall and erect, the women differing from those of the unfortunate Hereros by their plump, well-fed, contented appearance; also, as with most Bantu races, the women have to work. They help with the building of huts, the cultivating of crops, and all the other tasks; in fact the men are inclined to be intensely idle, leaving their wives to do most things for them.

But both men and women are a cheery company, singing more often than not, and always seeming to be enjoying some private joke among themselves.

The women add artificial hair to what Nature supplies to them, and follow the most amazing fashions, some wearing it in long, thick ropes, reaching almost to their feet. This is unique in my experience, for I have always found the Bantu woman more disposed to build her hair into some astounding erection on the top of her head. Some of the Ovambo women, however, do build upwards, and a head of hair marvellously fashioned until it resembles a medieval helmet is not unusual. Where did they get the idea of the helmet? From some Viking rovers who came in contact with their ancestors; or did the ancestors themselves wear such things?

They seem to eat anything, including dogs



Photo, E. N. A.

OVAMBO WOMEN COOKING CORN



Photo, E. N. A.

OVAMBO WOMEN'S QUEER HAIRDRESSING

(although I have since learnt that hyena flesh is taboo), and they prefer their meat so "high" that you can smell it long before you see the village, but porridge and milk is their staple diet—the milk being a welcome addition to the gritty, scorched substance usually obtainable at a native kraal in Africa.

They own large herds of cattle and small stock, but they are farmers as well as ranchers, for they grow quantities of grain. A most marked feature about them is their care in providing against emergencies, so different to the average improvident Bantu. Their granaries are great baskets, beautifully woven, which they raise on tripods high off the ground, and they have a recognized reserve, below which the supply in those granaries must not be allowed to drop.

A contented, simple people, in many ways representative of African native life at its best, they are proud and quick-tempered, but equally quick to laugh and behave like children let out of school. The aloof, natural pride, which surrounds such a native like a mantle, is a surprising thing. For all that his arm-chair is the hard earth, and his total wealth probably insufficient to keep a civilized man in cigarettes, such a native earns respect from any white man who does not own an exaggerated superiority complex. One instinctively remembers one's best manners when visiting a Headman, even though he be as naked as a new-born babe and completely unwashed.

Racial pride is a serious handicap to successful colonization, and yet, paradoxically, it is the essential of success. Perhaps the secret is to be learned at school. The successful master is a god to his pupils, but not to himself, for in his

mind is the knowledge that his task is to pass on what years of experience have taught him. Who but a fool would attempt to explain the binomial theorem to lads who are still waiting to learn the rudiments of simple division? Yet the uplift of natives is often approached in an even more Alice-in-Wonderland fashion. Trousers seem to be a first principle of civilization. Put the natives into trousers and inform them that all men are equal under Almighty God; then tell them that all the customs and habits they have acquired throughout the generations are wrong; confuse them completely, so that they do not know what they are or where they are; then top the lot with a white man's hat, a number of new reprehensible habits and a Christian name—and civilization has spread light in a dark corner! The result is to be seen around any African town—a sheepish individual in trousers and boots (the latter often carried because they hurt), with a fine crop of vices, an astonishing variety of cheek (created by the knowledge that he looks a fool and cannot help behaving like one), and with an old familiar ju-ju hidden in some dark corner. In just such a way would Simpson Minor behave if pitchforked into the Sixth Form from some obscure back bench in the lower school. Much of Africa is still in the kindergarten stage, and in Ovamboland they seem to appreciate this, and to be graduating civilization's lessons accordingly.

Many tribal customs are left unchanged, and the people are left in their natural nakedness, if they wish to remain so. Some of the younger men emigrate to work on the mines and farms within the Police Zone, and they naturally bring back other ideas; but the transition period in the

history of a backward people seems less accompanied by ugly inconsistencies in Ovamboland than in most other places. This is strange, considering that there are no less than three varieties of missionary working among the Ovambos. The unfortunate native can scarcely be expected to appreciate the fine points of difference between the different denominations, and is rather in the position of a housewife visited by three vacuum-cleaner salesmen in one morning. They all claim to clean the carpet, but only profound technical knowledge can explain where any difference lies between them. The housewife often buys the one with the most shiny gadgets ; the native frequently attends the services of all denominations to get full value for his conversion.

The Ovambos are entirely dependent upon the missions for medical treatment, which seems as dangerous a procedure as for a certain type of salesman to offer to pay the first instalment for the housewife if she buys his cleaner.

I once read a book about mazes, but the writer should have visited Ovamboland before claiming to be an expert on the subject. There every kraal is a maze of little, winding passages and cross-corridors, separated by stout palisades of poles. Fortunately the country is pretty heavily bushed, with many more trees than are found anywhere farther south, for thousands must be felled and split to erect these strong palisades. The idea seems to be to make it just about impossible to intrude upon the occupants of the kraal without a guide ; and, in the case of a chief, the maze is even more extensive and intricate, so heaven help any unfortunate who tried to leave the royal presence in a hurry ! Trying to go home

to tea from the middle of Hampton Court maze would be child's-play compared to his task.

The prestige of the chief is very high, for not even the Commissioner is allowed to enter his hut. The Ovambo huts are built much lower than those of the majority of Africans, the apex of the roof seldom being more than five feet above the ground. Two reasons were advanced for this: that the homes were made more snug on a cold night; and that less timber was used in their manufacture. I favour the latter, for the people must have sickened of collecting wood long before the palisades were finished.

The huts vary up to about sixteen feet in diameter, and are built of poles set close together and plastered with mud, while the roofs are neatly thatched. Some of the thatching is very fine, showing skill and artistic taste, different grasses being blended to form a pattern. The result was strikingly superior to the hovels erected by most of the people farther south, including those *pondokkies* on the Cape Flats.

Near the chief's hut is the tribal fire, which must never do more than smoulder, and must never be allowed to go out. I was told that this represented the life of the chief, and that, should the fire die, the chief is dead; even though the unfortunate king be visibly alive at the time. So far as his people are concerned he died with the fire, and, as nobody feeds the "dead" man, the fiction soon becomes fact. (I cannot vouch for this; it was told me by an itinerant Ovambo who was returning home after working for white people in the Territory. The tribal fire undoubtedly represents the life of the chief, but I have been able to find no proof that he is treated so

hardly if it expires. As the Ovambo chiefs are absolute autocrats, I doubt if one would quietly starve to death; he would shrewdly invent some means of staging a "resurrection.")

The Ovambos live to a patriarchal pattern, separated more into little families than tribes, but each is governed by a chief under the control of the paramount chief, who is responsible to the Commissioner. They grow a quantity of grain and other crops, and are industrious and careful. They are a shy people, unaccustomed to white visitors, and inclined to hide in their huts (within those appalling palisades) if one appears. They seem, however, to be kindly and hospitable, and I can appreciate why, on one occasion, I was ordered to make myself scarce. They knew that I should not have been there, and were not taking any chances.

They bashfully fled at the sight of a camera, and, strange to relate, the photographs I managed to take are included with many equally valuable records which were lost in transit. It was as though Fate decreed that their distaste for publicity—their wish to remain behind their barrier—was to be respected.

After this fleeting glimpse of the contented, comparatively prosperous Ovambos—the race which evaded contact with the German administration—memories of what the Hereros suffered persistently forced themselves into my mind, as I turned back in my tracks and headed for the railway.

My self-imposed task was virtually finished. I had traversed South-West Africa from the Orange River to Ovamboland; the names—Damara, Hottentot, Bushman, Herero, Ovambo—had

materialized into men. I have examined their past and their present, and can only say of their future that they need nursing by an understanding administration, and that the past rears itself like a wall between them and Germany.

I have found that German propaganda throughout the Territory has been forced to become subterranean, but is none the less prevalent. That the German element in the white population is dragooned into accepting Nazi ideals, and that friction between the races naturally follows. The Germans not only want South-West Africa back ; they are determined to get it, and are doing much more than sit down and wish. To substantiate this statement I have included the findings on the subject of a Government Commission as Appendix A to this book ; while in Appendix C I present further findings of that same Commission. Because I fully appreciate the destructive nature of much of what I have to say, I have not been content with repeating what I saw and heard, but have limited my statements to those which are backed by documentary evidence.

I have said already in a previous chapter that I am neither a professional politician, nor an economist, so it is not for me to suggest what should become of this Cinderella-land. I merely set down the facts as I found them, and leave the world to judge for itself.

But as recently as January 30th, 1937, Adolf Hitler said, in the course of his speech to the Reichstag, on the occasion of the fourth anniversary of his assumption of power :

“ The German people once built up a Colonial

Empire, without robbing anyone and without war. This Colonial Empire was taken away from us. It was said that the natives did not want to belong to Germany. That the Colonies were not administered properly by the Germans, and that these Colonies had no true value. If this is true, this valuelessness will also apply to other nations, and there is no reason that they should wish to keep them from us. Moreover, Germany has never demanded Colonies for military purposes, but exclusively for economic ones."

Against certain statements in this speech I present what lies in the minds of the Hereros, the Hottentots, the Bastards, the Berg-Damaras—the native inhabitants of a part of that former Colonial Empire. Herr Hitler says that "there is no reason that they should wish to keep them (the colonies) from us. . . ."

I can think of approximately 230,000 reasons, which is an estimate of the native population of South-West Africa.

CHAPTER XIII

ROLLING HOME!

I

LUCK was with me in the end. My arrival at the railway coincided with almost clockwork precision with the arrival of that comic train. No words of mine can describe my feelings when a line of telegraph-posts, followed shortly by the appearance of the early morning sun shining on the twin ribbons of rails, suddenly showed up ahead. And then I saw smoke in the distance, and what was more, it was travelling in the right direction! A train! I ran the last stretch to the shelter alongside the track which represented Something-or-other siding.

I had won through. With ridiculously inadequate equipment, no transport but my feet, neither guide nor porter, steering almost entirely by compass, and for once making no mistake about it, I had crossed and re-crossed the stretch of uninhabited wilderness which is one of Ovambo-land's bulwarks. I take no credit for the trip; if it indicates anything about my character and capabilities, it would seem to suggest advanced suicidal tendencies. Luck was with me all the way.

And then the "coffee-kettle" came into sight, chugging and swaying along with delirious

abandon. The couplings between trucks are almost as long as the track is wide on this railway, with the result that progress is varied by a concertina-like expansion and contraction of the train, accompanied by noises like much old iron being thrown about. Passengers are treated like that figurative old iron. It is nothing to be seated in a normal position at one moment, and upon one's shoulder-blades on the floor a moment later.

I found the second-class coach (funds prohibited any thought of travelling "first") occupied by an elderly Dutchman and a German child—Piet and Mädchen, as I named them for my own convenience. Piet spoke nothing but Afrikaans, and Mädchen, being of some indeterminate age between seven and ten, was not very communicative in any of the three official languages of the Territory.

She was a solemn, round-faced, dumpy child, with stick-like flaxen pigtailed protruding under a sober, basin-shaped linen hat, and she was evidently a firm believer in the adage that "children should be seen and not heard." Her primness was miraculous. Whenever the train permitted she sat bolt upright, hands folded in her lap, large, solemn eyes placidly surveying either the seared wilderness beyond the windows, or the dusty, tram-like interior. The buck, ostriches, and other zoological specimens which popped up every now and again, either to run away from the train or try to race it, failed to bring so much as a smile to the solemn little face.

In fact, I was reminded of an occasion in England when, seeing a number of rabbits from the train

window, I exclaimed to a diminutive boy opposite :
" Look—bunnies ! "

I have never forgotten the scornful retort of :
" *Rabbits !* " nor the lofty way he ignored me for the remainder of the journey.

But Mädchen was not like that. She was just a simple little soul, who found life a very solemn business, and doubtless she was repeating fare-well instructions from her mother in time to the clanging of the train : " Sit up straight. Don't talk unless spoken to. Keep tidy. Don't lose your hankie, etc. etc. . . . "

When darkness fell for the last lap of our journey to Usakos, this prim little lady spread out her blankets on the seat ; then, after carefully placing her shoes where they would not get in anybody's way, and obediently sponging her face and folding her coat, she rolled herself into a cocoon until only the small nose and solemn eyes were visible ; but after that the train upset Mama's schedule of behaviour. That train would not let her sleep ; in fact, she was in danger of pitching on to the floor.

Piet and I tried to wedge her in, but we neither of us had any baggage the right shape, so, finally, she permitted us to sit beside her, with our feet wedged against the opposite seat, our backs forming human railings to her unusual cot. Even then sleep was really out of the question, and I have here some scraps of paper to remind me of attempts to interest her in noughts-and-crosses, and to make a peculiar sort of bird for her.

A Frenchman, on his way to take up a job in Afghanistan, taught my wife how to make that miraculous bird in Bombay. He spoke no English, and my wife's French is sketchy in the extreme,



so I was quite worried when I had to leave them together at the Opera house in Bombay while I put a phone-call through to my paper; but, on my return, I found both happily engaged in manufacturing these astounding birds out of their programmes. Unfortunately my efforts for Mädchen's benefit were all failures; they would not flap their wings.

Piet was a cheery old soul; a typical Boer, with the addition of a strong sense of humour. We competed against one another in the spinning of tall stories, and what did it matter that we each generally laughed in the wrong place? I doubt if he understood a half of what I said, and I know I did not understand as much as that, while I suspect that behind that solemn mask, little Mädchen was shaken with laughter at the mess a grown man could make of a simple language like Afrikaans.

I was running short of tobacco, but Piet's voluminous pouch passed more time in my hand than his (my pipe was half the size of his vast "saxophone," and needed filling twice as often). Both he and the child had brought some stores with them, but I had cut matters so fine that a scrap of dried meat about the size of a matchbox (and about as edible), a damp smell in one water-bottle, and some broken fragments of biscuit, were all that I could contribute to our meals together.

Comic little kid, Mädchen—I am afraid mothers with modern ideas would say that she was repressed, and would talk about complexes, and a lot of other pseudo-psychological bunk—but I am thinking of the solemn, careful way that she peeled an orange, broke it into geometrical halves, and put one half

on my knee. That was one of the few times that she plucked up the courage to speak before being spoken to, and she was very shy about it.

"Nice!" she asserted, in that tone of voice which mothers use when persuading a peevish youngster to eat its spinach.

It was nice, and I thank you again, young lady. In fact, I will take a chance on you never reading this and say that I considered you altogether adorable, and that the thing I was whistling when I watched you walk self-reliantly away into the dark cluster of buildings where you left the train, was a fox-trot ballad: "Stay as sweet as you are!"

II

I joined the mail-train at Usakos, and having picked up, not only the typewriter and other kit that I shed on the outward journey, but also a parcel of more respectable gear posted from Capetown, I was able to appear in kit which did not look as my shirt and shorts naturally did at the end of the trek. I lolled on the comfortable sprung seats, sleeping a great deal of the time; ate like an anaconda while my funds lasted; tried to wash the dust out of my throat with beer, and the sand from every crevice in my skin with the water in the lavatory; and all the time the train rushed me back over the miles that I had covered so laboriously.

My job was finished; another African experience over. The train would take me to Capetown; a ship would take me to England, where folk who catch the same train every morning waited to

say: "Been to Africa again! How exciting!—George and I went to Brighton—I must tell you about that. Talk about excitement——" And their viewpoint is absolutely sound. By the Rhodes Memorial, before this trip properly began, I toyed with the theory that environment makes the man; environment certainly governs a thrill. What thrill can there be about meeting a lion in Africa; famishing with thirst in a desert? You expect such things to happen. Only the unexpected is really exciting. For this reason it is more memorable to be thirsty in an English town because the pubs shut at a different time to those in your home city; and the fact that you meet Binks in Brighton when you thought him in Aberdeen is more exciting than meeting a lioness on a ridge in lion country. Now, if I had found an English inn (open or shut) up by the Etosha Pan; or met Binks instead of the lioness—those would have been unforgettable thrills

Fortunately for the remaining shreds of my sanity, neither happened, although Africa had a final jolt up her sleeve for me. When I considered my trip over, nothing further to do but sit in a train and know that the miles were slipping by, the capricious lady did her best to "throw a spanner in the works." Word began to circulate along the train that the Orange River was in flood.

"It's risen twenty—thirty—forty—lord-knows-how-many feet! Upington is under water! People drowning by the hundred! There's an ocean between us and the Cape. The Union Castle Company have been requested to send their new 25,000-ton motor-ship to collect refugees. . . ."

These exaggerations were supported by the driver, fireman and guard of a goods-train which we met in the region of Kalkfontein. The sober truth seemed to be that the river had risen some twenty-six feet ; the train from the Union was stranded on the far side ; and we would never get through. Later, we met the passenger train which should have gone through to De Aar a couple of days before, and the rumour was finally confirmed. The railway bridge was several feet under water, so they were returning to Walvis.

There was a glimmer of hope, however. Passengers had been transferred by motor-lorries, because a road-bridge up-river was so far holding out against the pressure of the stream and was fordable.

Passing again through that barren, rock-strewn country immediately north of the Orange River, where I had met the prospector years before (it seemed like years to me), our anxiety on the train began to increase. There were quite a few passengers, and the query on all lips was : " Can we get through ? "

One woman had saved up for an incredible time to get away from South-West for a holiday ; business-men had important appointments in Capetown ; some, like myself, had ships to catch, and not a day to spare. The comments passed upon the vagaries of the Orange River, and the capriciousness of Africa in general, were lurid and unanimous. Here were people coming from a drought-ridden land, a place where their farming activities are most often nullified by lack of water, where they frequently know what it is to be more than ordinarily thirsty, and water—the precious liquid they so often longed for—

was putting a barrier between them and their goal. Millions of gallons of water were overflowing the banks of the river, while stock, and even men, died of drought not many miles away.

So used were these people to being short of water that most of them had brought their own canvas water-bags, which they hung outside the windows to catch the breeze. It was so precious that they dare not trust to the supply on the train ; they must have their own reserve.

Funny ? Damned funny ! The sort of humorous twist that makes one appreciate how near laughter is to tears.

We descended from the train at Upington in a vociferous stream. We all spoke at once. Anybody wearing railway regalia, or looking at all intelligent, was bombarded :

“ Can we get through——? ”

“ We must ! I can't stay here—— ”

“ My husband—— ”

“ My wife—— ”

“ My children—— ”

“ My business—— ”

“ My ship—sailing on Friday—— ”

“ You must get us across somehow ! ”

The railway administration was equal to the occasion. As unflurried and stable as London policemen, men in peaked caps took charge of our motley, excited throng, and we were shepherded to waiting lorries. Arrangements were made to transport baggage, but to be on the safe side, most passengers stumbled along with as much as they could carry. A fine bull-terrier, whose master had religiously exercised it every time the train stopped (taking it for a little walk and generally having to bundle it aboard the

last coach) enjoyed the fun and entangled its lead around all legs and other obstructions in the vicinity. People laughed again. This was fun—they were going to get us through—so this was all fun !

We sat on seats tied to the lorries, while we told one another what a wonderful organization was the railway. The baggage was dumped into trailers, with railway officials perched heroically on top of each mound (one of these stalwarts clasping the scared bull-terrier in his arms), and light-heartedly, capricious Africa was defeated again.

There was water on the road-bridge, flooded land all around like a vast lake, but the lorries splashed their way through to where the train from De Aar was waiting to make the return journey with us all. They had even been warned by telephone how many passengers to expect, and had accomodation reserved for each of us, with our names on cards by the windows. When that train drew out of the station I knew that I had cleared my last hurdle, staked my gamble against Africa and won out once again.

Is it necessary to say that I could not remain in my compartment ? Life had recently been too kaleidoscopic to drop back immediately into the normal rut of civilization, with its formalities and conventions. I congregated on the observation platform with two young Germans, some South African women, and a Dutchman, and stayed there until once again I saw night pale out into day over a wide, desolate land.

On such an occasion, in such surroundings, it seems necessary for all humanity, whatsoever their race, white or black, to sing ; so, discordantly

but happily, we carolled to the moon those tried old favourites of which that same moon must be growing heartily sick. We slaked our thirst and washed the sand from our throats with nothing more potent than the contents of a water-bag hung over the rail of the balcony. But if our liquor was humdrum, our cups were varied in the extreme (the actual extreme being an empty condensed milk tin collected from a lady in the first-class, whose infant was being fed on the stuff).

As daylight brought another sleepless night to a close, I realized that soon I must say good-bye again to the freedom of such surroundings, must put on collar and tie and a city suit, with all that goes with them. So I filled my bakelite cup again and proposed my old, favourite toast :

" To Africa—Kipling calls her ' a woman wonderful '—at times we hate her, for she rots us with fevers, tries us to the limit, breaks our endurance and tries to break our hearts, giving us rain when the rivers are flooded, and drought when man and beast die of thirst, but—for all that—we love her ! And we can't stay away."

" *Prosit !* " said the Germans, dutifully raising the milk tin and a mug ; the women smiled ; while " *Cheerioh !* " said the Dutchman proudly ; and then the party broke up.

In the morning at De Aar, when we were decanted on to the station, we met again over coffee in the refreshment-room, but gone was the free-and-easy friendship of the night. We were studiously polite ; perhaps scarcely recognizable in the trappings of civilization (although

the younger German clung to his battered helmet and wore his tobacco dangling in a bag at his waist).

The journey was ended. Civilization claimed its own.

III

England again! Southampton wreathed in a cold grey mist, damp and depressing, which stirs the fever in my bones. The usual welter of noise and movement on the quay; the hiss of steam from the engine of the Boat-Special; the clatter of cranes and derricks; the rumble of trolley wheels; the excited voices of those come to meet friends and relatives; and nobody there to meet me—the car with my “reception committee” lost somewhere in the fog.

The confusion of dodging round numerous happy groups, overhearing snatches of reunions:

“You look no different at all. . . .”

“Hasn’t he changed! . . .”

“It seems like yesterday . . .”

“ . . . and mother said not to forget . . .”

“The Smiths asked to be remembered to you, and Mr. Jones, and Willie . . .”

“Oh, my dear . . .”

Then the real thrill, after struggling to a phone-booth, of hearing a voice say: “Hullo Daddy—I’ve been playing wing-three for the House Second XV. . . . Isn’t she there? They started off early this morning. . . .”

Then back into the bustle. It seemed unbelievable, as I roamed through the crowd, hearing nothing but English on all sides, that less than

three weeks before I sat under a bush in complete solitude, hearing no human voice, as alone as Adam born into a new world. A quiet sea voyage had scarcely prepared me for the change. I felt deafened, bewildered, entirely out of place ; so I found a quiet corner and perched on the top of my few battered cases, where I waited to be collected. Naturally my thoughts went back to the wide, empty land between the Orange River and Angola, the Kalahari desert and the sea. Incidents passed in review, a confused whirl of memories. I remembered the terms of my self-imposed commission ; the task that I gaily set out to accomplish when I sailed from this same port of Southampton :

“To study conditions in a corner of Africa which is a bone of contention among statesmen in far distant cities who have never seen Africa, but who, by fixing seals and signatures to documents, can change the destinies of thousands of simple people ; to discover what actually lies behind the barren, unprepossessing coastline, to meet the people who live there, find out what they do, what they think of the question of return to Germany ; what the Germans are doing on the spot about it ; what the natives—the Damaras, the Hottentots, the Hereros, the Ovambos, and the Bastards—have to show in the way of a past, a present and a future.”

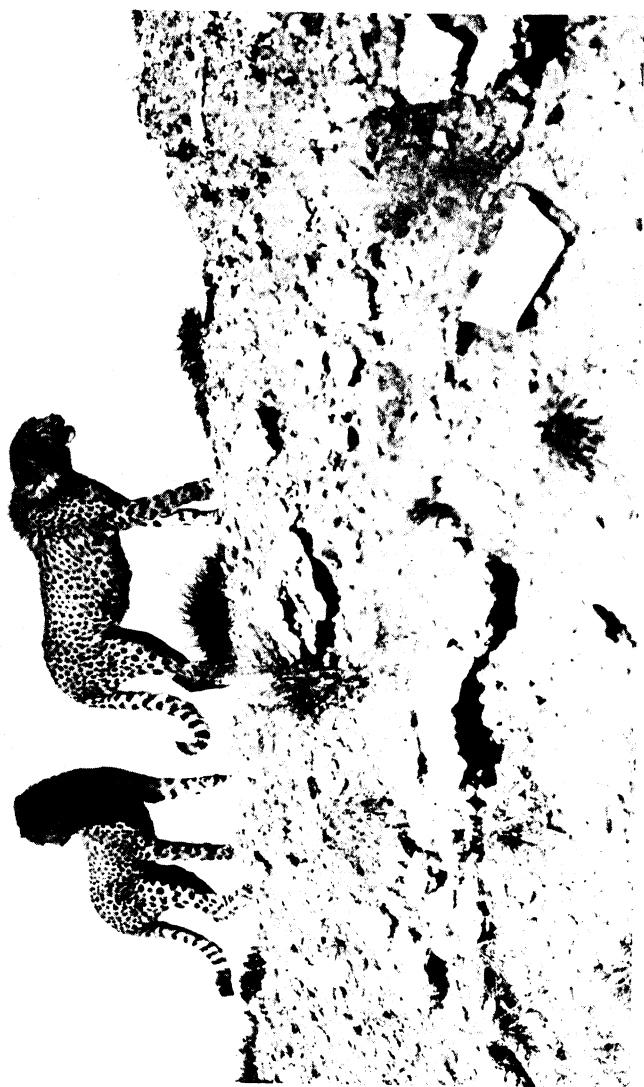
I have done most of that to the best of my ability. I have examined the present of South-West Africa, and had the past paraded before me in all its sordid, pitiful detail ; but sitting in the gloom of the Customs-shed at Southampton, the problem of the future of Cinderella-land

asserted itself. I realized that I would not be content until I knew more of what was likely to happen to all those people into whose lives I had been accorded a fleeting glimpse.

That first Hottentot that I met on South-West African soil; the men, women and children, descendants of Namas and Orlams, with whom I talked and lazed the sunny hours away outside their dilapidated huts; the scattered white settlers who gave me hospitality; that old Rehoboth burgher with his family by the broken-down cart; the other old man who told me scraps of the saga of the Bastards, and exposed his hatred of the Germans; Herero women, gay in their significant finery; their bitter, degenerated men-folk; the Dung-Damaras; the Bushmen; the Ovambos—all those, white, black or “coloured,” who helped or hindered me—what is to become of them? Will they form an experiment in colonization, to demonstrate what the New Germany can achieve in comparison with the old Empire? Will political juggling persuade the Union of South Africa to rid herself of her expensive ward?

Since then I have read the report of the Union Government Commission which toured the territory in the attempt to solve the problem of South-West Africa's future, and I find that each of the three members made a different recommendation for the future administration of Cinderella-land.

They were agreed that “more active steps be taken by the Mandatory for the development of the non-European races from their present backward condition . . . and that financial appropriations be made for this purpose.”



And that " steps be taken to demarcate reserves for Bushmen . . . and research be undertaken into scientific problems regarding the most efficient methods of farming in the Territory."

Furthermore that " the system of indirect rule in Ovamboland be continued and developed . . . and that attention be given to the view that many mineral deposits could become a source of income to small miners if the necessary guidance is made available by the Mines Department."

Then they make certain financial recommendations, which it is beyond the scope of this book to recapitulate, and, finally, the Report says :

" After the most careful consultation and consideration, however, we regret that in regard to some of our recommendations we have been unable to find common ground. Our individual views we submit . . . in separate memoranda. Although we approach the matter from different angles we are in agreement that :

" (a) The present form of government in the Territory is a failure and should be abolished.

" (b) There is no legal obstacle to the government of the Mandated Territory as a province of the Union subject to the Mandate."

And what of those individual recommendations ? After examining the entire state of affairs in South-West Africa, and dealing fully with the legal questions concerning its administration under the mandate as they arise, Mr. Justice van Zyl, states :

“ In all the circumstances, I have come to the definite conclusion and I recommend that the Union should take direct charge of the administration of South-West Africa and do so through the Union Parliament and the Union Ministerial Departments : i.e., that the Territory be administered as an integral part of the Union, that the Union Parliament legislate for it, that the Union Ministers, in and through their respective departments of State, assume in relation to South-West Africa the same direct authority and functions as they do in relation to the Union, that provision be made for the election of members to represent South-West Africa in the Union Parliament, that, as regards the subject matters which in the Union are delegated to the provinces, provision be made to delegate such subject matters, with such modifications as circumstances may require, to a local Assembly and Administrator with executive, on lines obtaining in the provinces of the Union.”

In less official phrases, Mr. Justice van Zyl's suggestion boils down to the lessening of the legislative powers of the Administration in South-West Africa, bringing the Territory under the direct control of the Union as a fifth province, and thereby placing the services of those ministers who handle Native Affairs, Agriculture, and the other departments of State in the Union at the disposal of South-West Africa. In this connection he points out that :

“ The Natives in particular would benefit from such a manner of administration. A separate South-West African Administration, hampered

by lack of staff and funds, could be expected to do little more than maintain law and order. . . . All these matters can be better studied and dealt with if tackled by the Department of Native Affairs of the Union. That department has experience of similar problems in the Union, and has expert officers who could bring their attention to bear on problems in South-West Africa similar to those they have been investigating in the Union. . . .

"When one considers, therefore . . . that the Territory has not the means to appoint or maintain adequate and qualified staffs :

"(1) To investigate, study and deal with matters connected with the moral and social welfare of the Natives, such as their health, education and instruction and guidance in industrial and pastoral pursuits.

"(2) To investigate farming problems in South-West Africa and to furnish the farmers with expert advice.

"(3) To deal with serious outbreaks of stock diseases and with large-scale locust invasions.

"(4) To investigate mining problems and to make a survey of the minerals of the country so as to make available information which would assist prospecting and mining on a small scale.

"That the Union Government has well-organized departments which maintain staffs of experts qualified to deal with and advise on these matters.

"It seems clear that it would be of benefit to South-West Africa if it were to be governed directly by the Mandatory through its parliament

and administrative departments in the manner which the framers of the Covenant apparently envisaged.

"It might be argued that all this would place too great a financial obligation on the Mandatory . . . I submit that this is unavoidable, and I am of opinion that if the unsatisfactory finances of the Territory do not permit of more generous appropriations, the Union . . . should be prepared to supplement the funds required for this necessary and important work. . . ."

In other words, Mr. van Zyl points out that the Union is ideally situated to tackle the problem, having the experience and the means at her disposal. Nothing would have to be created; existing machinery would do the work; and one might add that the present prosperity being experienced by the Union of South Africa makes it the more feasible that she should assume the burden of Cinderella-land. Quite how a practically bankrupt Germany proposes to deal with such financial obligations I hesitate to suggest.

Mr. Justice van den Heever, the second member of the Commission, disagrees with the proposal that the Territory be administered as a province of the Union,

"The advocates of this method of government hope," he states, "that it would remove the present uncertainty . . . incorporation, subject to the Mandate, could only be an administrative measure and cannot, therefore, affect the uncertainty actually inherent in mandate, which uncertainty can only relate to its termination.

"The Mandated Territory is a new and undeveloped country, weak in resources, with a

community not yet firmly established. The circumstances do not warrant an elaborate form of administration. Moreover, because of its comparative isolation, and its special relations to the Union, its position is comparable to that of Territories for the transfer of which to the Union provision was made in Section 151 of the South Africa Act, rather than to a province. It seems to me that the Schedule to the Act of Union was conceived to provide for a system of government under circumstances very similar to those of South-West Africa and to regulate similar relations. *Mutatis mutandis* it could be satisfactorily applied to the Territory therefore. . . .”

(This Schedule provides for the administration of any such Territory by a Commission appointed by and responsible to the Prime Minister of the Union. For convenient reference the Schedule to the South Africa Act, 1909, is printed as Appendix D (page 334).

“In our form of government,” continues Mr Justice van den Heever, “the Prime Minister is always the leader of a great party. Quite apart from his onerous duties *qua* Prime Minister, he is, therefore, perhaps the most harassed individual in the Cabinet. I would suggest, therefore, that another Minister be charged with the administration of the Territory. . . .” (Fully to appreciate this suggestion it is necessary to read through the Schedule [Appendix D] and observe how the responsibility for administration through the Commission devolves upon the Prime Minister in the form of government provided for therein.)

“I would suggest that the Commissioners be appointed for five years, not ten, and that they

be selected on the basis of their ability to represent the various industrial interests in the Territory. They should not be public servants except perhaps in the case of the Commissioner to represent Native interests. Provision should be made for the submission to the Government by each of the various industrial organizations in the country of the names of two or more persons for nomination. . . . This would cut clean across racial or political divisions. . . .

"The form of administration which I suggest would have the following advantages over the present and over incorporation :

- "(1) It would remove all incentive to political and racial agitation among the Europeans.
- "(2) The administration would not be embarrassed by the claims of a disloyal or irresponsible electorate.
- "(3) The fears and doubts which exist and cause the present feeling of insecurity are largely artificial, fostered by party politicians. With the disappearance of politics these will be allayed and the inhabitants would be able to devote their energies to the development of the country.
- "(4) Public expenditure would in some measure be influenced by the resources, the prospects for development and the requirements of the Territory.
- "(5) There would be no temptation to extend to the Territory the operation of such of the Union's laws as were framed to regulate a more developed economic and industrial system.
- "(6) The Union Government would directly and impartially control the budget and

the allocation of the country's revenues to services benefiting the aborigines and the Europeans respectively. Policy in the Territory would be less liable to be influenced by party politics and the Union would consequently be in a better position to discharge its obligations under the Mandate.

- “(7) This form of administration would be less costly than either the present or some form of government as a province of the Union; a weighty consideration if one bears in mind that the Territory is generally unable to balance its budget.
- “(8) When the Territory's situation has changed so that some form of representation could be given, the franchise could be granted to Union nationals, whether by birth or naturalization, in the Territory for the election of representatives in the Union Parliament. Such delegation of responsibility cannot be said in any way to conflict with the Mandate. . . . No drastic changes in the pattern of government would be necessary. The machinery for the application of Ministerial responsibility would already be in existence, subject to adequate control by the Union Government for the discharge of its Mandatory obligations. There would be no merger of the Territory and the Union and no confusion in regard to the former's peculiar international status.”

But Mr. Justice van den Heever admits that this might be considered a retrograde step, taking

away, as it does, almost all representative control of the administration from the residents in the Territory.

"To this recommendation," he says, "the objection is made that it suggests a reactionary step; that constitutional privileges once granted cannot or should not be lightly revoked.

"The first leg of this argument is on a par with most claims of superiority; as it is difficult to apply a rational or absolute criterion, one is apt to decide arbitrarily, according to one's bias or preconceived notions. I submit no government change can *per se* be a retrograde step. A form of government which runs counter to all theory, if it works reasonably well in practice, is better than a theoretically perfect system which is out of touch with the realities of the situation."

Then he goes on to rebuke the European inhabitants of the Territory for being quarrelsome and unfitted for politics :

"The German section cannot complain if their political rights are curtailed. The grant of those rights implied loyalty on their part and co-operation with other Union nationals. Obsessed as they all confessedly are with the Nazi WELTANSCHAUUNG, with its apotheosis of 'Blood' and 'Leadership,' their convictions leave no room for co-operation on democratic lines with members of what they regard as an alien race. In the light of their political philosophy they scoff at the outworn ossuaries of democracy and liberal institutions. They can hardly complain if they are relieved of what they hold in contempt."

The italics are mine, because I wish to bring this paragraph into prominence, for it bears out so completely the state of affairs—the atmosphere—which I found prevailing from the Orange River to Angola.

With regard to the other Europeans, he says :

" It is objected that the Union section will have a valid grievance if they are deprived of their share in the government. From the nature of the Union's obligations these rights could not have been committed to them as a permanent delegation, but merely as a temporary trust. They have not been happy in their discharge of this trust. They have been whimsical and mercurial in their political aims, now asking for extended powers, then again for suspension of the Constitution and at another time for incorporation in the Union. The same leaders who would one day boycott all things German on the slightest provocation would make common cause with the Germans on the next. Leaders as well as electorate have not exhibited much fixity of purpose, public spirit or aptitude for government. The European section have certainly not exerted themselves to further the moral and material welfare of the Natives."

Shades of the impressions which I gained in Windhoek ! I feel that I should state here that Mr. Justice van den Heever is an eminent authority in international and constitutional law who has had direct experience of South-West Africa since 1920.

He concludes : " The responsibility for the good government of the Mandated Territory is that of the Union alone. Furthermore, it is the concern

of the whole nation, not only of that portion which happens to be resident in the Territory. In principle, therefore, I cannot see any good ground for objection to the course I suggest. . . .

“ While the Territory remains impressed with the character of mandate, it will labour under the disadvantages inherent in the system. To me it is inconceivable that any form of government in the meantime which leaves out of consideration the essential difference between the relations of the Union to its provinces on the one hand and to the Mandated Territory on the other, could fail to prejudice and embarrass the Mandatory.”

IV

So we have two suggested forms of government for South-West Africa—incorporation in the Union as a fifth province, and semi-autocratic control by Commissioners appointed by the Union Government. The third member of the Commission, Dr. J. E. Holloway, agrees more with the first than the last.

He cannot agree that Mr. Justice van den Heever's suggested system of government would lead to peace and contentment among the white population, accustomed as they have become to having a share in the government, and he points out that, in the case of the Europeans, full citizens are being dealt with, not a backward race under tutelage.

He agrees with the Chairman (Mr. Justice van Zyl) “ that there should be closer administrative integration with the Union. On one important



HERERO "SOWED" CATTLE

phase of such integration, however," states Dr. Holloway, "I do not find myself in agreement with him. He recommends that '... as regards the subject matters which in the Union are delegated to the provinces, provision be made to delegate such subject matters with such modifications as circumstances may require, to a local Assembly and Administrator, on lines similar to those obtaining in the provinces of the Union.'

"Now, education is the corner-stone of the whole provincial edifice. Yet to place education under the control of a local legislature (in South-West Africa) would be to make it a political football, and this would be disastrous from the point of view, both of the interests of the children, and of the good relations between the two major sections of the white population.

"The essential characteristics of the provincial system cannot, therefore, to my mind, be introduced into the Territory for a long time to come. . . ."

Dr. Holloway then goes on to suggest the lessening of the powers of the local Assembly in South-West Africa, placing Native Affairs, Land Settlement, Education, Mining, Administration of Justice, Policing and finance under the direct control of the Union Government, with certain modifications concerning Education, Justice and Finance; and that the other purely local administrative activities—such as Agriculture, Postal Services and Public Works, Game Preservation, etc., "be controlled by the Administrator, acting with advice from a nominated advisory council, and under close supervision of the Union Government."

As Dr. Holloway points out, with regard to

these Local Government activities : " All these . . . have this in common, that they are not prone to excite racial passions. . . . I consider that these activities can form an excellent basis, on which racial co-operation between the German and the Union sections can be established, without the evil of racial strife, from which the Territory has suffered so much."

So now we have the three individual recommendations :

- (1) The administration of the Territory as a fifth province of the Union.
- (2) Semi-autocratic control by Commissioners appointed by the Union Government, answerable to that government and not controlled by a local electorate.
- (3) A modification of the first : direct control by the Union Government of certain departments, but local authorities left with advisory powers.

I have quoted these recommendations rather fully, because they represent the conclusions of experts at the very job which I undertook ; they also toured South-West, seeking answers to the same questions that I set myself ; if I may use the term, they poked inquisitive noses into obscure corners, and they had the advantages (and disadvantages) of being an official body. The usual quibblers may bring against them the accusation that I sought to avoid—that they saw and heard only what they were meant to see and hear—" that the most presentable children in the house were paraded to do their parlour tricks "—but their findings agree, nevertheless, with those of one unofficial observer, who plodded

through the Territory on a bicycle, seeking facts for himself and shunning all official guidance.

They cannot agree on the actual form of government most suitable for the Territory, a further indication of the difficulties and expense involved in the control of this Cinderella-land, but nowhere in the report is there any suggestion that South-West Africa should be returned to Germany.

But reports have a trick of being ignored when international statesmen are playing their elaborate game of chess, with backward territories filled with thousands of human lives, for pawns. Even as I write this Herr von Ribbentrop, the German Ambassador, has been discussing, informally, Germany's colonial problems with the acting Foreign Secretary at the Foreign Office in London (February 11th, 1937).

Negotiations are likely to be prolonged, bargains probably struck, but strokes of a pen cannot wipe out the scars left by what took place between 1890 and 1914. The natives of South-West Africa have not forgotten, and politicians must not be allowed to suffer an economically convenient lapse of memory.

I shall never be able to put out of my mind stories that I heard from simple people of tortured men, violated women, and a nation driven out into the desert under an extermination order, and I repeat here that the essential fact which must govern South-West Africa's future is found in the poorest native hut. Germany's demand for raw materials and room to expand, the economic and political factors attached to the question of the Mandated Territories in Africa, even the failure to come to an agreement on the part of

the Members of the Commission, must fade into insignificance before the barrier of memories which exists in the minds of the Non-European population. Germany has left there a legacy which cannot be ignored. The economic needs of a European state and the exigencies of international politics, must not be allowed to be an excuse for betraying any of these people to even the shadow of fear that history will repeat itself.

The past rears itself like a wall between South-West Africa and Germany.

APPENDIX A

NAZI ACTIVITIES IN SOUTH-WEST AFRICA

A REPORT (U.G. No. 26, 1936) was submitted to the Governor-General of the Union of South Africa in March, 1936, by a South-West African Commission. The report was signed by H. S. van Zyl, F. P. van den Heever, and J. E. Holloway, as chairman and members, and J. Nesor, as secretary of the Commission. Section XI of Chapter V (paragraphs 253 to 309) bears the heading "Nazi Activities," and is here reproduced *verbatim* and in full.

253. The apprehension of the Union section was accentuated by the fact that in time a new spirit came to animate the Germans. They had always adopted towards the Union nationals an attitude of aloofness; co-operation between the races could only be said to have existed in that both sections were politically inarticulate. On the advisory councils, which functioned prior to the coming into operation of the present constitution, only carefully selected late enemy subjects served; they were not answerable to an electorate and there was consequently no temptation to play on the racial feelings of their compatriots.

254. No sooner did the present constitution with its elections and political atmosphere, come into operation, than the races clashed with much resulting estrangement and bitterness.

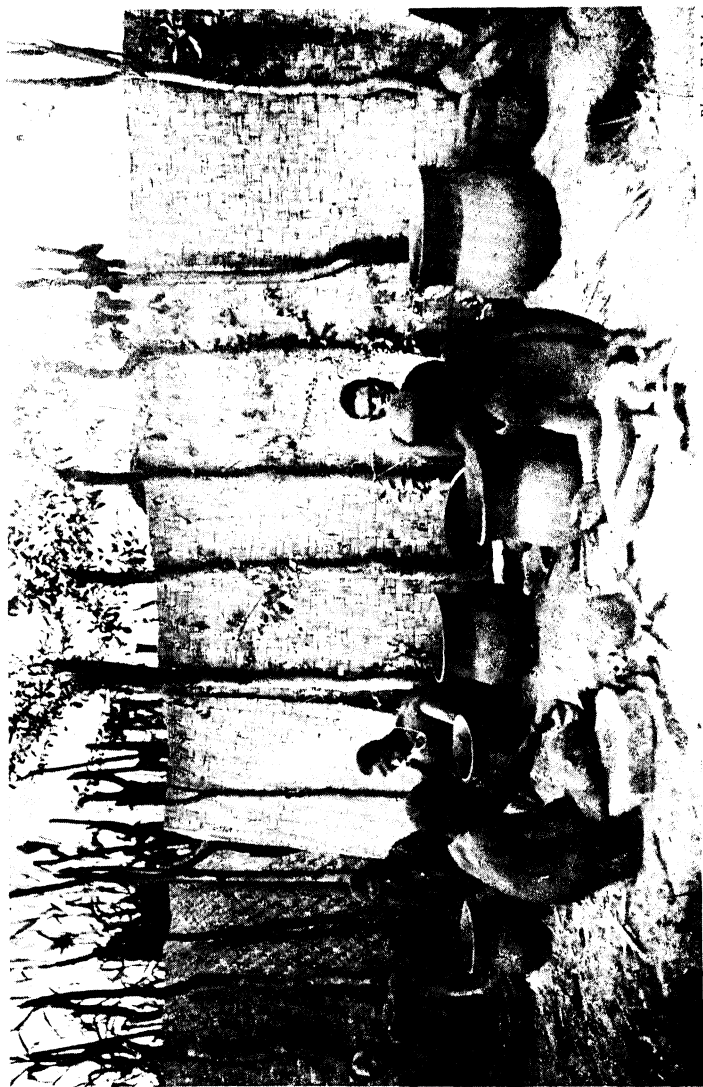
Union nationals were inclined to approach political questions from a racial point of view; the Germans did likewise and, moreover, followed aims which the Union nationals regarded as subversive of the existing order and threatening to their political future.

255. As early as 1926 the apprehension of the Union nationals was aroused by propaganda for the return of the Territory to Germany. Thereafter the races clashed on such issues as the status of the German language and the naturalization laws. In the beginning of 1932 however, forced by the desperate financial situation of the country, the warring factions came to a compromise, commonly referred to as the Cape-town Agreement, and a resolution was passed requesting the Union Government to take measures for the removal of the restrictions of Sections 26 and 27 of the Constitution Act so as to bring the following subjects within the competence of the legislature :

- (a) Police.
- (b) Civil Aviation.
- (c) Primary and Secondary Education.
- (d) Land Bank.
- (e) Disposal of Crown Lands.
- (f) Posts and Telegraphs.
- (g) The powers presently vested in the Administrator in regard to the Public Service.

256. The grounds for a compromise were contained in a rider coupled with this request, praying that the request be granted only on the following conditions precedent, viz, that :

- (a) German be made an official language.
- (b) All Europeans domiciled in the Territory



Photo, E. N. A.

A GROUP OF OVAMBOS MAKING POTTERY

on December, 1931, be naturalized automatically ;

and

- (c) The Naturalization of Aliens Act, 1910 (two years residential qualification) be applied to all aliens settling in the Territory in the future.

257. The parties to this agreement considered that with more unfettered powers the Territory could work out its own financial salvation. They submitted their agreement to the Prime Minister of the Union, who gave it his blessing. Many of these changes could be effected by the legislature of the Territory itself either directly or with the consent of the Union Government, but because of the renewed racial bickerings which ensued, all steps in this direction proved abortive.

258. A strong case was put before us by Dr. Hirsekorn, a member of the Legislative Assembly and Executive and Advisory Councils, to prove that the Union section was to blame for the breach of this agreement. He based his contention on the fact that Mr. Niehaus, the then leader of the chief political organization of the Union section, had, at a public meeting in September, 1932, advocated the incorporation of South-West Africa, subject to the Mandatory limitations, as a fifth province in the Union and that in November of that year the Executive Committee of that organization had confirmed Mr. Niehaus' action.

259. In reply thereto, we were referred by the leaders of the Union section to paragraph 2 (a) of their programme of principles which reads as follows :

“ The United National South-West Party aims

at the development and realization of the convictions and aspirations of the South African people in South-West Africa for the good of the country and its people, by :

- (a) the abolition of the Mandate system and the attainment of closer association with the Union. . . .”

260. They maintained that the compromise was come to on the distinct understanding that the opposing political organizations with their respective objects and aspirations would remain intact and that this particular aim was in no wise repugnant to, or necessarily in conflict with, the compromise.

261. It seems to us that the leaders of the Union section did not act in the spirit of the Capetown Agreement, when they brought the question of incorporation in the Union into the political arena at the end of 1932. But subsequent events have shown that, because of the circumstances of the two sections of the European population and the mental reservations with which they entered into the arrangement, the Capetown Agreement could never have been put into operation satisfactorily, for if given effect to, it could only have led to such intense political strife and bitterness that the constitution could not have functioned.

262. It seems fruitless, therefore, to enquire at any length into the question of who is to blame for the failure of the Capetown Agreement. The fact remains that soon after the compromise was struck the parties accused each other of bad faith and resiled from the Agreement by passing a unanimous resolution in the Assembly requesting the Union Government not to grant the extended

powers previously desired, before carefully examining the position.

263. It is clear, however, that the political activities of the Germans gave the Union section grave cause for alarm, especially since the rise to power in Germany of the National Socialist Party. Before this a branch of the Nazi Party had existed in the Territory, but it was generally regarded as not of much consequence. When, however, that party assumed the reins of office in Germany the situation changed. People who were aware of the corporative nature of the German constitution, under which the party is the State and the Führer is the party, did not welcome the sudden impetus to and the growth of that party in the Territory.

264. In July, 1933, a certain Dr. Brenner arrived from Germany armed with powers and funds for the Nazification of all German institutions in the country. He commenced by introducing dictatorial methods. All organizations, social, cultural, political and educational, of which the human material was mainly naturalized Union subjects, were dragooned into this Nazi complex. The schools became nurseries for the cultivation of Nazi recruits. Provocative processions were organized, the Union flag was hauled down from the Government buildings, and the German flag substituted. Literature was widely disseminated among the population making propaganda for the return of South-West Africa to Germany. In December, 1933, the German Consul at Windhoek urged the Director of Education to have history taught in the German medium government schools with a National Socialist bias. This request was not complied with, so

the Nazi Party itself took the matter in hand. On the 10th March, 1934, the Auslandsabteilung in Hamburg sent circular instructions to all district and local organizations of the Nazi Party in foreign countries. These were told that :

“ There are also schools where the German element is predominant, but which are also subject to the control of governments of foreign countries, and where the political N.S.D.A.P. leader and the chief N.S.L.B. officer must, therefore, proceed with great care so as not to destroy existing values. . . .

It will be the task of the Home country to see to it that in future only such teachers shall be allowed to teach German youth in foreign countries as are firmly rooted in the national socialistic spirit.”

265. Dr. Wallberg, the principal of the Oberrealschule in Windhoek, took exception to the exaction from his pupils of formal pledges of unquestioning obedience to the leaders of the Hitler Jugend, on the ground that such pledges were derogatory to parental authority. The South-West leader of the Nazi Party wrote to Dr. Jung of the Colonial Political Department of the Party at Munich :

“ I have just heard from a private source that Dr. Wallberg is coming out again. I would regard this as a great danger to our movement and juvenile education . . . he and his wife are strong reactionaries and favour the Afrikaners.”

266. He suggested as a successor a strong Nazi, who, he admits, suffers from weaknesses not desirable in a teacher, but who has been eminently

successful in the Nazification of the pupils in his charge. In April, 1934, Dr. Jung replied :

“ Regarding Wallberg, I shall also speak to Bohle so that the necessary steps may be taken at Hamburg to prevent his return to South-West Africa.”

267. Confidence grew with success and in June 1934, Maj. Weigel wrote to the leader of the Deutsche Bund :

“ The German Empire and the N.S.D.A.P. are one to-day and the German school at Windhoek is above all a German affair, and not a South African.”

268. It would be tedious to adduce further evidence, but it is clear from the correspondence placed before us, that the Nazification of German-speaking school children of Union nationality in South-West Africa was directed from Germany : its object was to bind those children by ties of loyalty and allegiance to the head of a foreign State in derogation of their obligations as citizens of the Mandatory. It is clear, further, that this propaganda was designedly conducted in such a manner as to hoodwink the Administration and mislead it into regarding these political activities merely as a cultural exercise. On the 27th April, 1934, Dr. Jung, of the Auslandsabteilung writes to Maj. Weigel :

“ Lossnitzer has now definitely been designated Youth Leader and will travel out at the beginning of May. I shall see to it in Berlin that his position is disguised in some way. At the moment he and his wife, who is to take over the direction of the B.d.M. (organization

for girls), are together at the Hitlerjugend school for leaders."

269. Associations of girls were organized in a similar manner, but, to avoid rousing the suspicions of the Government, under the guise of a junior branch of the "Women's Federation." On the 4th March, 1934, the Jugendführer for South-West Africa wrote to the Auslandsabteilung of the Reichsjugendfuehrung that the uniforms of the guide movement and of the B.d.M. (the feminine counterpart of the Hitlerjugend) have been made more or less indistinguishable in South-West Africa and proceeded :

"In case the B.d.M. is prohibited, the Administration will prohibit only those groups which are undisguised. On the prohibition coming into force everybody will wear the uniform of the guide groups. On this ground I maintain the fiction of a youth group of the Women's Federation. I beg you to confirm my orders. . . . I beg you to inform Dr. Schwietering, the leader of the Bund, P.O. Box 17, Swakopmund, through the medium of the Foreign Office—for only the directions of the Foreign Office are promptly executed by the Deutsche Bund—that all girl guide groups in South-West Africa are subordinated to the youth movement of the Reich and to the local department of the Hitlerjugend.

"The adherents of 'the system' urge the Deutsche Bund to create a youth organization under its auspices. . . .

". . . Will you please inform Schwietering through the Foreign Office that the entire male youth is subordinated to the youth movement of the Reich and the local Hitlerjugend. . . .

"On account of the Deutsche Bund it is absolutely essential that we keep the old Pathfinder uniforms. . . . We must keep the two uniforms so that in case of a prohibition we can stick everybody into the Pathfinder uniform. In public we must maintain the fiction that a Pathfinder organization still exists. This the Government cannot prohibit so easily, seeing that there are also Afrikaner and English Pathfinders.

"Please confirm this dual uniform."

270. On the 7th February, 1934, the officer in charge of the organization of the Nazi Party, Hamburg, sent out circular instructions for the swearing-in of all office-bearers of that party, also abroad. The formula was as follows :

"I swear that I will bear unbreakable allegiance to Adolf Hitler and yield unconditional obedience to leaders appointed by him over me."

("Ich schwöre Adolf Hitler unverbrüchliche Treue, ihm und den mir von ihm bestimmten Führern unbedingten Gehorsam.")

271. On the 27th May, 1934, the Territorial Führer for South-West, Maj. Weigel, reports to that office as instructed :

"At all meetings I supervised the solemn administration of the oath to all office-bearers and officers in the manner prescribed by you. From naturalized persons and young people a pledge was taken."

("Auf allen Versammlungen habe ich die feierliche Vereidigung der Stahswalter und Hoheitsträger in der von Ihnen angeordneten Weise vorgenommen, Naturalisierte und die Jugend wurden verpflichtet.")

272. From the forms of oath or pledge placed before us, it is plain that Union nationals were induced to enter into these formal acts. To us this seems incompatible with their obligations as citizens of the Union.

273. Recalcitrants were reported to the authorities in Germany and anyone who had possessions or relatives in that country had to be bold if he did not instantly come to heel. Party leaders in the Territory in correspondence with their superiors in Germany invited the application of coercive measures so freely and in terms so matter-of-fact that it must be clear that they at least did not consider the adoption of such reprisals as abnormal.

274. Those leaders in Germany, again, frequently sent instructions to investigate the conduct of persons in South-West Africa whose activities were suspected of being prejudicial to the Nazi cause. As the Reich's Decree of 14th July, 1933, on the denationalization of Germans, provided for the seizure and confiscation of the property of such individuals, it is clear that coercive measures were not necessarily limited to moral sanctions.

275. When Dr. Brenner dragooned the educational organizations into submission, Mr. Keller, a shareholder in the Germania, Limited, a company formed to conduct the business of German schools, sought to enforce what he considered to be his rights in the High Court of South-West Africa. His action, if successful, would have hampered the Nazification of the local schools and disclosed the political agencies at work. On the 27th February, 1934, therefore, the Territorial Leader of the Party wrote to the Auslandsabteilung, Hamburg :

"It seems to me, however, that precisely in this case it would serve a useful purpose if the Homeland (that is Germany) would take direct action against the person of Keller and make an example of him."

And in a letter of the 1st April, 1934, to the same department in regard to the same matter :

"I suggest to you, after studying the causes and effects of this Germania scandal, to take suitable measures of reprisals from Germany against the persons responsible."

276. That the authorities of the Reich were not indifferent to these bickerings and denunciations appears from a letter, dated the 7th June, 1934, from Dr. Wiehl, the German Consul-General at Pretoria, to Maj. Weigel :

"I have already instructed the Consul at Windhoek by telegram on the 28th March that the authorities at Home have decided that all disagreements among Germans at Windhoek should be settled by a Court of Arbitration to be appointed by Dr. Schwietering."

277. The Deutsche Bund is the political party through which the naturalized Germans exercise their political rights in the Territory. For a time it struggled for supremacy with the Nazi organization, whose members, however, always held a very influential position in that party's councils. During those struggles Dr. Jung of the Ausland-sabteilung wrote to Mr. Klatt (27th September, 1933) :

"Meanwhile the necessary steps have been taken at the Foreign Office and the Party Centres and on the 5th of October, 1933, Lt.-Col. Bauszus will arrive in South-West Africa with Consul-General Wiehl of Pretoria, armed with

Territory in question. The attainment of this object must be pursued in accordance with the general political directions given by the proper authorities in the Homeland."

281. The Nazi Party, on the other hand, is directed to support the Deutsche Bund in all things, seeing that the policy of the Bund has the approval of the Government of the Reich, and since the reorganized Bund automatically comprises every individual member of the National-Socialist Party. We quote from the instructions of Col. Bauszus to the N.S.D.A.P. :

" The Party (Nazi) is no longer an opposition party in relation to a government foreign to German interests, but is the vehicle of the German idea. From this it follows that the Party has at all times to support the policy of the Deutsche Bund, which is approved of by the Government of the Reich, especially as according to the constitution of the New Bund each Party member must needs be a member of the Bund."

282. When your Commissioners visited South-West Africa both the Führer and Secretary of the Deutsche Bund were in Germany, admittedly to consult the authorities of that country.

283. It is manifestly absurd to explain all these things, as Dr. Hirsekorn has attempted to do, in terms of cultural effort. In January, 1933, Ritter von Epp, of the Colonial Department of the N.S.D. A.P. writes to Maj. Weigel :

" Hence the necessity of maintaining the present political position of South-West Africa viz., that of a Mandated Territory, so long as to render possible its return to Germany at the given moment. The Union cannot possibly

object to this desire to maintain the *status quo* for it in accordance with the Peace Treaty."

284. Soon afterwards the Territorial Leader of the N.S.D.A.P. writes to a party subordinate:

"Our object here is to drum Hitler's programme into the Germans here to make a fight for the return of South-West to Germany as soon as possible by calling everyone a traitor, and treating everyone as a traitor who does not think and act similarly. The territorial group keeps in touch with the authorities of the Homeland."

285. On the 31st May, 1933, Dr. Jung, of the Auslandsabteilung, writes to Maj. Weigel:

"An endeavour is, however, being made to give the colonial idea an unofficial impetus, that is, purely from the party. With this end in view the various colonial organizations were combined, that is, within the Deutsche-Koloniale Geseleschaft. . . .

"I share his (Dr. Brenner's) view that it is now absolutely necessary to show some backbone against the Mandatory Government."

286. On the 1st May, 1935, Dr. von Oelhafen, Consul for the Reich in Windhoek, addressed a gathering of German-speaking persons, mainly Union nationals, as follows:

"If we declare ourselves for the F  hrer of our people (Hitler) this must be in all serious consciousness of ourselves, and with a view to the fate of this country which, following the illustrious example of the Saarland, demands that all Germans close the ranks of a sworn brotherhood (Eidgenossenschaft) of loyalty and discipline."

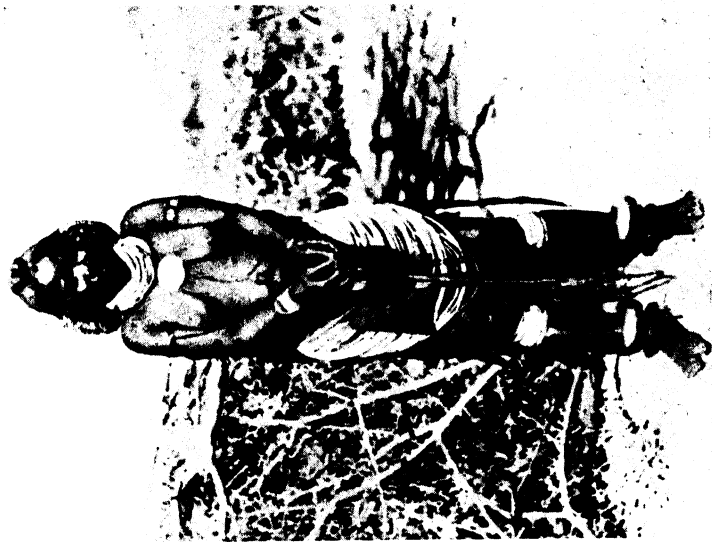
287. Propaganda for the return of the former

German colonies is actively conducted in Germany by powerful organizations led by persons who are high in the councils of the State. These activities apparently carried on with the approval of the German State Authorities, cannot but increase the uneasiness of the people in South-West Africa.

288. The suppression of the Nazi movement in the Territory has not substantially altered the position ; it merely served to concentrate Nazi energies in the Bund.

289. It is obvious too, that the councils of this Party—in so far as councils can be said to exist under a dictatorial regime—must be influenced by numbers of members who have no rights of citizenship. In practice, this consideration is of no consequence, seeing that in any event the Bund, as a whole, is pledged to trim its policy according to directions received from Germany. There is no room for individual thought or action in the Bund. It has become a voting machine pledged to political and, at that, foreign dictation : the individual is dragooned into conformity by threats of reprisal and persecution. The situation has become impossible. It leaves no room for co-operation between the democratic Union section and the German element organized into a Nazi complex, which, through an ordered hierarchy, owes unquestioning obedience and allegiance to the head of a foreign state.

290. Dr. Hirsekorn, who represented the views of the German section before us, suggested that the evidence in regard to the Nazi activities, foreign interference and the dependence of the Deutsche Bund, furnished to us, and the manner in which such evidence was—without ulterior motive—presented, conveyed a distorted picture



Photo, E. N. A.
AN OVAMBO WOMAN WEARING COPPER



Photo, E. N. A.
OVAMBO GRAIN STORE

of the facts. He was, therefore, given a special opportunity to restore the perspective. He said :

“ I admit that from the Nazi papers which were handed in, that Mr. Wandke and Maj. Weigel received instructions from Germany and interfered, in accordance with such instructions, with the internal matters of this country. Unfortunately the Nazi correspondence which was handed in, is not so complete as to enable me to follow up each separate action from beginning to end.”

291. He, therefore, tendered a series of extracts from letters from the Auslands Organization of the N.S.D.A.P. to the leaders of the Nazi Party in South-West Africa in order to correct this impression. He did this on the assumption that the originals of the extracts were in the possession of the Attorney-General amongst the papers seized by the police in the raid on the Nazi offices. Why he should have laboured under this impression, it is difficult to understand, as some of the extracts purported to be from letters written after the seizure of the papers referred to.

292. Incidentally, the extracts show that the Auslands Organization continues to hold communion with branches of its organization in South-West Africa after they knew that all Nazi activities were forbidden by the law of that country.

293. When the assumption, that the originals of the extracts were in the possession of the Attorney-General, proved to be erroneous and the material source of the extracts was enquired into, it appeared that they were sent by the Auslands Organization in Germany to the Deputy Leader of the Deutsche Front in the Territory, for use

before this Commission. As far back as 23rd of September, 1935, Dr. H. Hirsekorn undertook to furnish your Commissioners with the full text of the letters from which the extracts were taken, but up to the present and in spite of repeated reminders, that has not yet been done.

294. Copies of the extracts certified by an attaché at the South African Legation in Berlin from copies of letters produced to him, have since been supplied to the Commission through the German Minister at Pretoria, but the full text of the letters, though specifically asked for, have not been supplied. We can, therefore, judge those documents only from the extracts. In those which we quote below, written from the Auslands Organization in Germany to the Territorial group in South-West Africa, the names of the actual writers are not given, since they have not been furnished to us. We give in the annexure the extracts which have been placed before us, with the covering letter from the German Minister.

295. The Attorney-General explained the manner in which his selection had been made :

“ I selected certain documents which, to my mind, went to prove foreign interference. There may be other documents as well which show a pious hope or a wish expressed on the part of the German Government that there shall be no interference. Nevertheless, the documents I found, to my mind, proved it. ”

296. We have carefully considered the evidence and the arguments of Dr. Hirsekorn. It is true the extracts convey instructions not to make propaganda for the return of the Territory to Germany, and not to interfere with the domestic matters of the Territory. Dr. Hirsekorn, as an

example, quoted from Nazi correspondence, the following passage :

“ The head of the Reich has impressed upon us not to get mixed up in the politics of the country.”

297. It is, however, a matter of definition. The agents of a corporative state have rather unique ideas as to what are domestic matters. Dr. Hirsekorn himself, has described the Nazification of schools—in fact, all German activities in South-West Africa—as things purely of German concern, and has sought to justify interference from Germany with naturalized Union subjects in the Territory, on the score that Gen. Smuts paved the way by inviting such interference in the London Agreement of 1923.

298. It is clear, however, that such attempts at restraint (in themselves foreign interference with domestic politics) were not made on the ground that they were inherently improper, but because they were not opportune. So, for example, Dr. Hirsekorn quotes from a letter of the 6th of March, 1934 :

“ If the Deutsche Bund wishes to resist the aims of the Afrikaners to link up South-West Africa with the Union, that is a matter for the Bund, to be done in such a manner as not to lead to political conflict. But members of the Party (Nazi) may, under no circumstances, take part therein, by means of public speeches. It is not in the interests of the German Reich that Party Member Matthiessen should make the speech he proposes to do. He may, under no circumstances, deliver an address as party member, but must leave the action, which already becomes necessary, to the leader of the Deutsche Bund, Dr.

Schwietering. I am of opinion that the future of South-West Africa will not be decided in South-West Africa at all, but here in Germany."

299. One of the extracts handed in, dated the 12th of April, 1934, reads as follows :

"It is not only undesirable, but members of the movement are strictly forbidden to appear publicly at the coming elections and, *inter alia*, urge the return of the colonies. My personal conviction is that the decision whether South-West Africa is ever to be German again will not be made in South-West Africa, and not in the Union, but here in Europe."

300. The following is another illuminating excerpt (dated the 25th August, 1932) :

"I have already written to you in regard to propaganda for the return of German South-West, that the public propaganda for the return of the colonies to Germany is premature. For you must always be mindful of the fact that you are in a Mandated Territory, and that it could very easily lead to a prohibition, or the deportation of our party associates by the Union Government, on the ground that they interfere with the politics of a foreign power, which rules momentarily (*augenblicklich*). We all hope that South-West Africa will again be German, but, as I have already said, the matter will be determined not there, but here in Europe.

"It is remarkably difficult to give you detailed instructions from here as to how you should conduct yourself in politics there. The fundamental principle is that our party associates abroad should not interfere in the politics of the country in question. In South-West Africa the

position is different in that it is a Mandated Territory. Still, it is dangerous for a movement like ours to interfere in the politics of a Mandatory State. Authority is on the side of the Union Government, and, in my opinion, it would be best temporarily to adopt a waiting attitude, and to allow things to develop. As soon as we are in power in Germany these questions, which you raise, can be better judged, and a more teleological external policy will no doubt be followed."

301. We quote another extract, dated 28th August, 1934 (that is, after the prohibition of the organization in the Territory) :

" If the Mandatory Government or Other States still hesitate to recognize the organization, such as the N.S.D.A.P., in the country of reception in spite of repeated proof that in principle our organizations have not to worry themselves about the interests of the country of reception, or get themselves mixed up in such interests, the time will yet arrive when this struggle will be given up. To-day it is already a fact which no one abroad can overlook, that power in Germany is exclusively in the hands of the N.S.D.A.P. The time will arrive when every foreigner will see a national socialist in every German."

302. Another such extract is dated the 1st November, 1933 :

" . . . Moved thereto by certain reasons, I again bring to your notice in the most pointed manner that on the part of the Territorial Group, the local group and the cells (stutzpunkte) of the N.S.D.A.P. in the former protectorate, all agitation, which could create the

impression that the new Germany will seize South-West Africa, must cease.

" I apply to all groups and party members again to direct attention to this, and to see to it that such announcements cease entirely. You must know the attitude of the Auslandsabteilung that all intervention in the domestic policy of the country of reception is prohibited, and you know that from a public political point of view South-West Africa is to be regarded as a country of reception (Gastland). It should be made absolutely clear to party members that Germany does not even contemplate the violent recapture of the colonies."

303. We have seen, however, that sentiments diametrically opposed to these canons of expedience constantly emanated from the Auslandsabteilung, and in one case from the Foreign Office.

304. In order, further, to show how little the Deutsche Bund merited the reproach of subservience to foreign dictation, and how unexceptional its attitude was, Dr. Hirsekorn quoted from " a confidential political report of Dr. Schwietering in his capacity as leader of the Deutsche Bund, to His Excellency, Lt.-Gen. Ritter von Epp in Munich." But why should the leader of a South-West African political party, as such, be constrained to report on domestic matters to the chief of a foreign political organization ? In the report Dr. Schwietering says :

" As an example of the difficulties which I have to face, I may quote the order which Maj. Weigel received to request all officers of the Party to swear a solemn oath of allegiance to our leader, Adolf Hitler. As a great number of

these officers became automatically naturalized, and had two nationalities, and are regarded by the Mandatory Power as British subjects, the execution of this order from our Fatherland would undoubtedly have had serious political results."

305. What is significant here is that Dr. Schwieger is not asserting his independence as a South-West African politician ; he is merely reasoning with persons having authority over him, and asking for greater freedom of action, not as of right, but because it is expedient.

306. To what extent do these extracts refute the charge of interference ? It is clear from them that instructions were repeatedly issued to the effect that "all intervention in the domestic policy of the country is prohibited." This is the only way in which they purport to disprove the charge of intervention. This injunction in itself is unexceptional as an expression of correct behaviour for foreigners living under the rule of another country. But was it observed as a rule of conduct by the Germans in the Territory and by the Auslands-Organization itself ?

307. We need not labour the point that the very fact that such instructions were given shows interference. In actual practice the interference went much further. Union subjects were "verpflichtet" to the head of a foreign state. Union subjects who exercised the right to follow a line of conduct approved by Germany in the London agreement were called traitors and treated as traitors. Union subjects were threatened with reprisals if they exerted their right of free speech in a way which was considered detrimental to the policy followed in the Territory at the dictation of

the Auslandsabteilung. The Consul-General and a Party Leader from Germany who came in, ostensibly to further German cultural objects, really welded the German population, naturalized as well as the others, into a political machine to maintain a favourable position for the return of the Territory to Germany.

The very N.S.D.A.P. which expresses admirable sentiments about non-interference, instructs the Leader of the Deutsche Bund that the object of that organization should be limited to the maintenance not, as one would expect, of the political rights of the Union subjects, which it represents, but of "German interests in the Mandated Territory," and that the attainment of this object must be pursued "in accordance with the general political directions given by the proper authorities in the Homeland." Yet there must be no interference!

308. We find that there has been continual interference from the Auslands-Organization in the affairs of the Territory and that, as a result, freedom of speech, of political association and even of personal conduct has ceased to exist in the Territory for a large number of Germans who are Union subjects, and who are entitled to the protection of the Mandatory against such infringements of their political rights.

309. The smooth functioning of the Mandate system becomes practically impossible if such interference in the affairs of a Mandated Territory continues.

The following Supplementary Statement on Paragraph 307 has been issued subsequent to the publication of the report :

Statement by the Union Government in regard to Paragraph 307 of the REPORT OF THE SOUTH-WEST AFRICA COMMISSION.

“ The attention of the Union Government has been drawn to the words :

“ ‘ The Consul-General and a Party Leader from Germany who came in, ostensibly to further German cultural objects, really welded the German population, naturalized as well as others, into a political machine to maintain a favourable position for the return of the Territory to Germany.’

appearing in paragraph 307 of the report of the South-West Africa Commission, which might be construed as an accusation of lack of sincerity on the part of Herr Wiehl towards the Union Government. As the nature of his mission had been disclosed by Herr Wiehl, then German Consul-General and now German minister to the Union Government before his departure for South-West Africa, and had been approved of by them, and as, moreover, Herr Wiehl had, on his return informed the Union Government of the result of his activities, the Union Government feel bound to seek an opportunity to declare, after consultation with members of the Commission, that such interpretation would not correctly reflect the views of the Commission nor would they reflect those of the Union Government. The Union Government have been given to understand that the word ‘ ostensibly ’ used by the Commission in the above sentence, was not intended in any way to cast doubt on Herr Wiehl’s sincerity, but merely to convey that the Commission did not accept the contention of the Germans in South-West Africa that the aim of the German movement

in South-West Africa was solely the promotion of German cultural interests.

“The Union Government have never had, nor have they now, any reason to doubt the bona fides of Herr Wiehl, and they regret that the real view of the Commission was couched in terms susceptible of an interpretation that Herr Wiehl misled the Union Government as to the nature of his mission.”

APPENDIX B

EVIDENCE RELATIVE TO THE TREATMENT OF NATIVES BY THE GERMANS AFTER 1906 AND UP TO 1914

*(By kind permission of the Controller of H.M. Stationery
Office)*

THE parliamentary Blue Book of 1918 (Report on the Natives of South-West Africa and their Treatment by the Germans—Cd, 9146) is based on the examination of German judicial and administrative practice, on official documents in the archives at Windhoek, on sworn statements made by Europeans and natives of all communities, and on the writings of Governors and recognized German authorities.

No evidence given by the natives is included which is not confirmed from German sources.

The accounts of the suppressing of native risings, including the carrying out of the "extermination order" issued by General von Trotha against the Hereros, makes tragic reading, but I content myself with giving a few of the extracts from native evidence of treatment during the last years of German occupation (between 1906 and 1914).

(NOTE : I did not read this report until after my return to England.)

This significant statement of opinion occurs in the Introduction to the Report : " Enough should be found in this report to convince the most sceptic of the unsuitability of the Germans to

control natives, and also to show him what can be expected if the unfortunate natives of this part of Africa are ever again handed back to the former *regime*."

Here are the extracts from native evidence :

Gerard Kamaheke (Headman of the Hereros at Windhoek) states on oath :

" When the troubles were all over I was sent to work . . . at Heusis. After the rebellion, the Germans forced all natives to work, men, women and children over seven years of age, and prohibited us from owning or acquiring any cattle or stock. No regard was given to family ties or relationship. Husbands, wives and their children were separated and sent to work in places far apart from one another. They never saw one another again, and I know of cases where husband and wife after many years of separation have again met one another for the first time after the British troops occupied our territory in 1915. My wife and I were separated for a year only, but mine was an exceptional case, I was more fortunate than most people. The treatment of our young people was very bad. The boys and younger men were often flogged, and our women and young girls were immorally assaulted and made to act as concubines of the Germans. Windhoek location is full of the bastard children of Germans by Herero women. I think that in my location at Windhoek the number of bastards exceeds that of the pure-bred Hereros."

Jacob Barnabus Katjakundu (Herero, of Omaruru) states on oath :

" Shortly after the rebellion I was made a

warder and put in charge of the native convicts in Omaruru gaol. Heinrich Tjaherni was in charge of the flogging work, and his assistant was Alfred Katssimune. Richard Kainazo succeeded Heinrich. We were all under a German police sergeant. After a native convict had received his flogging he was sent to the gaol, where it was my duty to put his chains on. No convicted native prisoner (male) was ever without chains. The women were not chained as a rule, though in a few cases this was done. I remember we had one chained by the neck for about two weeks once, but she made such an ado about it that we eventually took the chains off.

“ In addition to the ordinary handcuffs and wristlets, there were three other kinds of chains used in the gaol. I will try to describe them.

“ No. 1.—Ankle and neck chains. Iron bands or rings were fastened round the ankles. The bands or rings were joined by a short chain about eighteen inches long, and attached to the middle of this chain was another chain which joined on to an iron collar round the prisoner's neck. All convicts wore these chains, and had to work in them. The cross chain between the legs made it necessary for the wearer to straddle rather than walk. He also had to regulate his stride carefully. If he stepped out too far the rings hurt his bare ankles, and if he merely shuffled he ran the risk of tripping over the chain. As it was, the iron ring used to cut and chafe the bare skin, and what with flies and dirt the cut parts used to become festering sores. Many convicts got so bad that they were eventually quite unable to walk. They used to pick up dirty pieces of rag and sacking and thrust them between their

legs and the rings. Such prisoners were never medically treated by the Germans, and if they got too bad we took off the chains until they were well enough to wear them again. Often when working with a gang out in the veld getting wood or stones, I used, out of pity, if I had the keys, to unlock the chains.

"No. 2—The neck chain. These chains were made up of neck rings to which were attached chains about five to six feet long. They were put on two or more prisoners at a time, and in that way linked together by the neck collars; the larger gangs were sent out to work generally in batches of from four to six. These chains were worn in addition to those I have already described, and were only for outside work. They were taken off when the day's work was over, before locking the convicts up. They were also used by the police on the outside posts for the purpose of securing two or more prisoners on a journey to town by road or train. In addition, handcuffs were also used in such cases. If a single prisoner was brought in by the police he was handcuffed and made to trot in front of the horse. Often he would be tied to the saddle by a rope fixed round his neck. If he got tired he was urged on with a sjambok.

"No. 3—The third kind of chain used was the rigid arm bar and the leg bar. They were never used at the same time, and were only put on prisoners or convicts who had attempted to escape from custody or who had been guilty of stock theft or some offence more serious than disobedience, laziness, or impertinence. This chain consisted of a heavy iron bar about eighteen inches long with rings at each end. In the case of the

arm bar, it was placed across the wrists and the rings locked ; two heavy anklets were fixed on the legs, and from each anklet a heavy chain was fastened on the middle of the bar. When wearing this chain, in addition to the discomfort to his legs, the prisoner, owing to the weight of the iron cross-bar, was compelled to let his arms hang down as far as possible, and he could not properly use his hands so as to touch his face, as the lower chains were too short for that. When lying down he was compelled to lie on his back. He could not lie either on his sides or his stomach. A similar chain was the leg bar chain, only in this case the bar was fixed on the ankles instead of the wrists and the connecting chain fastened to a ring in the cell wall. While wearing this the prisoner could not walk at all or move about. He either had to remain seated with his face to the wall, or, if he wished to rest, lie prone on his back. He could also turn over on his stomach, but could not lie on his side or cross his legs. If, after a severe flogging, a convict were put in these chains, it was agony and torture to him, as he would be compelled always to lie on his stomach until his back healed. It was only in exceptional cases though that this was done.

“ In their bare cells, which were filthy and full of vermin of all sorts, the prisoners were herded together. They got no blankets, and had to sleep in their sack uniform on the cold stone floors even throughout the winter. No clothing was given to them. A convict was stripped naked on admission, and an empty sack (a grain sack) in which a slit had been made for his head to pass through and two holes cut

for the arms was all he was allowed to wear. Otherwise he was quite naked. These sacks are rough and coarse and used to chafe and hurt many prisoners very much.

"I may say that if a convict had a private blanket with him when he was convicted he was allowed to keep it and sleep in it in gaol, but the German Government never gave convicts any such luxuries. Many persons died in gaol of sickness and exposure to cold. When the war was begun in 1914, the former ration of meal which the prisoners had received was stopped, and the convicts in the gaols were in a state of starvation. They got very thin, and several died I think because they had no nourishing food. All that the prisoners got were wild roots, which the German Government made them collect in the veld, or which were collected in Waterburg or elsewhere and sent to the Government. This wild root is something like a sweet potato and is called by us Ovipeva, and the prisoners did not get too much of that either. At one time I used to do the flogging of natives, but the Germans said I was not strong enough in the arms and could not hit hard enough. So they made me a warder, and Heinrich was made to do the flogging, as he is very big and strong. The flogging was done with a giraffe hide sjambok about four feet long. The average punishment was from 15 to 25 lashes. At one time 30 lashes were given, but it was found to be too much, and the number was reduced to 25. In such cases the lashes would be given in instalments of 25 once every two or three weeks, as soon as the old wounds healed. After about four or five blows the sjambok would cut the skin and blood would flow.

I have seen a good hard sjambok cut the skin to ribbons, and often at the first blow blood would be drawn if the blow were well directed. The prisoner was generally held down over a barrel and beaten on the buttocks and hips. The large majority of the natives who were thus flogged were accused by their masters of disobedience, laziness, or impertinence. In such cases the boy would be sent to the police station with a note from the master saving that 'Bearer has been cheeky,' or 'is lazy,' or 'has not done what I told him to.' On receipt of the note the police would at once order the native to be stripped and flogged. He was never asked for an explanation or his version. If he dared to open his mouth he was told to be silent, and if he denied his guilt he was told that his master could not lie, and often if a boy protested his innocence too much, the police gave him some extra lashes for being impertinent.

"This sort of thing did not happen once or twice, but was the custom. It happened every day, and from week to week and from month to month. It was bad before the Herero rebellion and twice as bad afterwards, and it gradually grew worse until 1914-1915, when the British troops made war. During the war things were very bad until the British entered the country and conquered it."

Willem Christian (son of the last Hottentot Chief of the Bondelswartz) states on oath:

"When the war broke out in 1914 the Germans did not trust us. They thought we would rise and help the English. So they collected our tribe and sent us to Tsumeb, in the extreme north of

this country. We lost all our small stock, and when the British troops released us at Tsumeb we had again been reduced to poverty. The British sent us back to our place at Warmbad and had to feed us to keep us alive. The British Government collected some stock for us and distributed it, but we have not yet recovered half of what we originally possessed in 1914. We cannot say what the Germans did with our stock. They must have died of exposure and disease, and some were slaughtered by the invading troops. The German Government was very severe and harsh. We were not allowed to select our own masters. We were simply ordered to go and work for a man. If we did not go, or tried to get permission to work for a more humane master, the only reply was a kicking or a flogging. Our masters had the right to flog us; the police could flog us if our masters complained. Cases like this never came to court. The police dealt with such matters summarily. If our masters did not pay us for our work, or if they underfed us and ill-treated us and we complained, we got no consideration. We were not believed, and any excuse or explanation was accepted from a white man. If we left our master's farm to complain to the authorities, the result was that we were either flogged and sent back to the master or we were imprisoned for desertion. Many people died in prison."

The Berg-Damara Chief Councillor, *Gottlieb Goresib* (brother of the Chief Cornelius and uncle of the present chief) states on oath :

"Up to the time the British came here in 1915 we had a hard life under the Germans. We had

no protection for our lives and property. We had no courts to which to go for redress, we were not allowed to speak ; the only people we saw were police sergeants, who thrashed and ill-treated our people all the time, just as if there was a war between us. It never looked like peace. They were always like savage roaring lions. We trembled in their presence, and they spoke to us as if we were lower than dogs. We were too afraid to open our mouths. That was the way the police treated us. We never came into contact with the other officials except when Major Leutwein or a big man occasionally visited our place."

Daniel Esma Dixon states on oath :

" German masters practically had power of life and death over their native servants. They could thrash and ill-use them as they pleased. If the native complained to the police he got another thrashing and was sent back to his master. No native was allowed to leave a master's service unless and until the master consented to release him. If he ran away the police went after him, thrashed him, and returned him to his master, where he generally received another thrashing. I will give one instance as an example (one of many that I know of). It occurred at Usakos in 1909. I was then living for a while in the house of a German named Trautemann. On a certain Monday morning the native boy did not come to his work. After breakfast Trautemann took a sjambok, and went to the native's hut. The native was lying down and said he felt very ill and that was why he had not come to work. Trautemann said that he

was only shamming sick and that he was a liar. The native persisted. He looked ill and I was inclined to believe him. Trautemann however refused to do so and ordered the native to come out of the hut. As he did so Trautemann set on him and gave him a severe flogging with the sjambok. The boy made no resistance and made no attempt to run away. Trautemann then ordered the boy to follow him to the police station. He did so. I accompanied them, as I was curious to see what would happen next. Feld-webel Laueras was the man in charge of the police. Trautemann complained that the native boy was lazy and shamming sick. The boy was asked no questions, but was promptly stripped and laid on his stomach over a cement cask and given 25 lashes with a heavy sjambok by order of Laueras. He was in a state of collapse, but was ordered to start work at once and promised another 25 if there was the slightest indication of laziness. The boy staggered away and tried to work, but I could see that he was very ill. He gradually got worse and shortly afterwards collapsed altogether and was sent to the hospital. That was the last we saw of him. This is the way the natives were treated all along."

The foregoing statements, made on oath in the course of the past four months, will give some idea of the reign of terror which existed among the natives of South-West Africa. Instances of cruelty, injustice, and barbarism might be multiplied almost indefinitely. Instances of gross and bestial conduct, which for sheer depravity and immorality are well-nigh unbelievable, are also contained in the files of affidavits, but they are hardly fit for publication. The

extracts reproduced have been selected at random from the affidavits of natives of all races throughout the country.

This state of affairs continued right up to the occupation of South-West Africa by the British troops under General Botha, and the records of the Special Criminal Court appointed under the British regime will indicate that the German settlers, not quite appreciating that the old order had changed, took some time to grasp the fact that under British rule wholesale shootings and floggings of natives and inhuman brutality towards their native servants would not for one moment be tolerated.

The available German records indicate that the complaints of the native population as to merciless flogging for trivial offences are quite correct.

From the returns of "Crimes and Offences Committed and Punishments and Penalties inflicted during the period 1st January, 1913 to 31st March, 1914," filed at Windhoek (German Records, F.V.K.I., 3-18), details may be gleaned which throw a lurid light on the system of justice practised by the Germans. Further details will appear dealing with the native as an accused person (Chapter I, Part II). For present purposes it is sufficient to state :

That the total number of native convictions in the whole Protectorate from 1st January 1913 to 31st March, 1914 was 4,356. Of these, 4,039 were males and 317 females. The punishments include :

- (a) 841 sentences of imprisonment with hard labour, with or without lashes.
- (b) 507 sentences of imprisonment in chains, with or without lashes.

- (c) 2,787 sentences to lashes (including also, in some cases, either (a) or (b) above), whereby 46,719 lashes were inflicted. This is an equivalent to an average of about 17 lashes per punishment.

Lashes were invariably inflicted for such crimes as desertion, negligence, vagrancy, disobedience, and insolence. Strokes with a cane were inflicted on juvenile offenders.

It is interesting to see how the bulk of the total of 4,356 convictions is made up.

There were :

894	for desertion.
826	for negligence.
429	for vagrancy.
414	for disobedience.
256	for insolence.
198	for contravening Pass Laws.
150	for laziness.

3,167

These offences, therefore, constitute nearly three-fourths of the total. Under the compulsory labour system it is only natural that men who are forced to work for masters whom they did not like, and who treated them with harshness and brutality, were tempted at times to desert or to be disobedient. Often such offences solely arose out of the inability of the natives to understand the orders of their German-speaking masters. In regard to desertion, which, as will be observed, heads the list of crimes, the report of the officer in control of native affairs, the Imperial Native Commissioner at Windhoek, filed with the records, is significant.

Dealing with the period already referred to, he says :

But it did not avail the unfortunate native charged with desertion to advance such pleas. He was dealt with in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred "by summary procedure."

The police sergeant gave him his lashes, and he was hurried back to work for the master whose ill-treatment had made service unbearable.

When considering this list of floggings and punishments it must be borne in mind that it represents probably only a fraction of the thrashings actually meted out. Under the German system there grew up the custom of "Väterliche Züchtigung," or paternal punishment. The German master was regarded as being *in loco parentis* to the childlike native, and could thrash him whenever he wished and for any reason whatsoever without risk of punishment for assault. It was only when the native died or was sent to hospital as a result of such paternal chastisement that questions might be asked; even then no serious notice was taken as a rule. As Leutwein put it :

"Beating to death was not regarded as murder; but the natives were unable to understand such legal subtleties."

If, after what he considered was an unmerited paternal chastisement, the angry native dragged his aching bones to the nearest police station to report, he generally got lashes at once for "desertion" and more paternal chastisement on his return to his master's farm.

The records given are those compiled shortly before the outbreak of war in 1914. So that up to that time the German system had in no way been altered or modified.

OBSERVATIONS ON CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IN S.-W. AFRICA UNDER THE GERMAN REGIME (Taken from the same Report—Appendix I.)

"The sjambok was the prescribed instrument for inflicting lashes in S.-W Africa during the German regime. It may be described as a short handwhip varying in length from 3 to 4 feet, and composed entirely of the raw hide of such animals as the giraffe, rhinoceros, or hippopotamus. The handle is rigid, and the lash gradually tapers to the point, which is very supple and consequently not under control. It is generally used for driving cattle, and will, if sufficient force is applied, cut clean through the skin of even these animals. The lashes were administered by a native policeman, who was selected on account of his strength. The prisoner, after being stripped, was placed prone over a barrel, box, log of wood, or other convenient object, and held securely by the hands and feet by two or more assistants. This position allows of the delivery of the downward and more forcible strokes with the sjambok, and greater laceration of the tissues necessarily results. Further, as the prisoner was able to wriggle about while being flogged, it was impossible to place the lashes accurately, and very often the point of the sjambok would reach round the abdomen or other parts. Of the natives who have passed through the Native Hospital at Windhoek since our occupation, a very large percentage bore unmistakable evidence of having been brutally flogged. For instance: A boy who received nearly ten years ago, 60 lashes, in instalments of 15 at fortnightly intervals, was laid up in the prone position in hospital for two months

after the flogging. The buttocks show extensive scarring, due to the complete destruction of the skin and a distribution of scars over the upper and outer part of thigh and abdomen, caused by clean cuts of the sjambok. Another native who received, about ten years ago, 37 lashes for desertion from service of a brutal master, in two instalments of 24 and 13 respectively, shows similar scarring, which extends beyond the buttocks. This boy required a month's treatment after the flogging. Similar instances could be multiplied indefinitely."

C.—OBSERVATIONS ON CAPITAL PUNISHMENT AS PRACTISED BY THE GERMANS IN SOUTH AFRICA.

" Executions were carried out in a very crude and cruel manner. The condemned prisoner was conducted to the nearest tree and placed on an ammunition, biscuit, soap, or other box or convenient object, and the rope, after being run round his neck and through a fork of the tree, was fixed to the trunk. The box was then removed and death resulted from asphyxiation. Under these circumstances fracture—dislocation of the spinal column rarely can have taken place. There was no privacy about the proceedings, nor, except in towns or in their immediate vicinity, was the body taken down and buried.

" The majority of the victims . . . bear evidence to the cruelty and torture of the chain system.

" Where numbers of executions had to take place, a rough gallows was put up and the hanging carried out in the manner described above.

" In other instances the condemned prisoner was strangled by merely hoisting him off his feet by utilizing the fork or branch of a tree.

"When rope was not available, telegraph or telephone wire or other convenient material was used.

"Very rarely could death have resulted instantaneously.

"L. FOURIE, Captain, S.A.M.C.

"District Surgeon, Windhoek.

"19th January, 1918."

The Report quoted in this Appendix was framed by Major T. L. O'Reilly (attorney of the Supreme Court of South Africa) and Mr. A. S. Waters, B.A., under the authority and supervision of Sir Horace Gorges, Administrator.

APPENDIX C

EXTRACTS FROM THE REPORT OF THE SOUTH-WEST AFRICA COMMISSION

To substantiate certain comments I have made with regard to the feeling prevailing among the white people in South-West Africa, I repeat here paragraphs 175 to 177 and 245 to 252 of the findings of the Commission appointed by the Union Government to inquire into the existing state of affairs in the Territory :

175. Complaints were frequently made that the attitude of the Union to the Territory left a good deal to be desired ; that people in the Union knew little or nothing of the Territory and its affairs, and were inclined to prejudge it ; that visits of Cabinet Ministers were few and far between, and of such short duration as to make it impossible for the Ministers concerned to gain an adequate knowledge of the country ; that Parliament made laws which apply to the Territory, such as those dealing with Customs, without adequate knowledge on the part of its members of conditions in South-West Africa, and that the Union farmers looked upon the Territory as a menace to their markets, without considering the advantage to the Union generally, and to the farming community in particular of the markets of the Territory.

176. It must, we think, be admitted that

there is a good deal of ignorance in the Union about the Territory, and that it is a drawback that laws relating to it should be made by a Parliament in which there are no members to speak for its inhabitants. The Territory also buys more from, than it sells to, the Union. Even if the comparison of markets is limited to farming products, the balance of advantage is not always with the Territory. While latterly the extremely depressed state of the country has seriously reduced its value as a market, the following table of the trade between the two countries in agricultural and pastoral produce, including such processed products as flour and sugar, shows that in 1931 and 1932 the Territory's imports of these articles from the Union considerably exceeded the exports to the Union although latterly the trend has been sharply reversed. (Here follow the figures for Union exports into South-West Africa, and South-West Africa exports to the Union, for the years 1931, 1932, 1933 and 1934, which it is unnecessary for me to give here. It is sufficient to state that in 1934 South-West African exports to the Union exceeded imports from the Union by more than £100,000.)

177. In addition, South-West Africa imports from the Union large quantities of manufactured products for which agricultural raw materials are used, while the re-export trade is also a source of profit to the merchants of the Union. The figures show that the trade relations between the two countries is of benefit to the Union.

245. It is a common cause in South-West Africa that uncertainty as to the political future of the country is the basic reason for the dissatis-

faction now prevalent. It retards the development of the country, makes investors of capital shy and has an unsettling effect on the inhabitants.

246. The result is they are inordinately preoccupied with politics; not the practical politics relating to the good government and economic advancement of the Territory or touching upon their daily lives, but matters obscure and subtle, remote from use as far as their constitution is concerned, relating to world politics and the international situation.

247. A Mandate is from its very nature temporary; but we find that the uncertainty inherent in Mandate as an institution is exaggerated in the minds of the inhabitants and of potential investors from outside. This was felt very soon after the Mandate devolved on the Union.

248. Whatever one may conceive the juridical basis of the Mandate over South-West Africa to be and whatever one may infer to have been the method of its termination contemplated by the framers of the Covenant, it is clear that it was the intention that the indigenous people should be placed under tutelage, and that safeguards in their interest should be maintained so long as they were not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world. If one considers the natural limitations and disadvantages of the country, its small carrying capacity, its unfavourable geographical situation and physical characteristics and its poor mineral and industrial prospects, it does not seem reasonable to anticipate any substantial alteration of the present demographic position, viz., a white minority leavening the mass of the indigenous population. As the Mandate was conceived in

the interests of these peoples, it was clearly intended that their future should not be mortgaged by any definitive disposition of the Territory, while the mass of the population still labours under the very incapacity which justified the institution of mandate.

249. If, then, one considers the backwardness of the indigenous population, it becomes clear that there is no reasonable expectation of their acquiring those mental, moral and civic qualities, which would justify their being taken into consultation, before a point of time so remote as hardly to merit present consideration. For missionaries of all denominations, who have devoted their lives to labour among these people, and whose optimism, born of faith, would not induce them to despair of their charges, were practically unanimous in holding that teaching and the inculcation of civilizing precepts alone cannot imbue the Native with that civic responsibility, which is now practically non-existent; that his lack of moral fibre could—if at all—be remedied only by slow development—which cannot be forced—and by contact with European civilization.

250. In view of the practical considerations, therefore, applying to South-West Africa, the termination of the existing jural relations between the Union and that Territory becomes a matter of speculation in regard to so distant a future that it is of no present importance. In itself, therefore, the inherent instability of mandates as a cause for anxiety in South-West Africa, is visionary. . . .

251. The foregoing conclusions assume the permanence of an international regime under the rule of law. In South-West Africa, however,

there is widespread feeling that changes in the international situation are imminent. Leaders of opinion in the German section openly express their conviction that the future of the Territory will be decided, not in accordance with the principles of the mandate, but as the result of developments in Europe in the near future. This has an unsettling effect on the Union section and fills them with apprehension so that they are loth to put further capital or energy into their ventures. On the German section it has the opposite effect. They enjoy wide liberties under the mandatory administration. Uncertainty causes them to hope for the realization of their racial aspirations and the return of the Mandated Territory to Germany. New German immigrants come into the country and invest in land.

252. The result is that the great majority of the Union section would welcome any step calculated to lessen this intolerable uncertainty, even a compromise such as purely administrative incorporation with the Union subject to all the limitations of mandate, whereas the German section resent any proposal or measure, however much to their economical advantage or however proper or legitimate, which might alter what they regard as a strategically favourable position and which they expect to ripen, if properly cultivated, into the return of the Territory to the Fatherland.

APPENDIX D

SCHEDULE TO THE SOUTH AFRICA ACT, 1909

To which reference is made by Mr. Justice van den Heever in his recommendations.

It is printed here for favour of convenient reference. (Sections 20 and 25 which would be out of place in regard to South West Africa have been omitted.)

SCHEDULE

1. After the transfer of the government of any territory belonging to or under the protection of His Majesty, the Governor-General-in-Council shall be the legislative authority, and may by proclamation make laws for the peace, order, and good government of such territory : Provided that all such laws shall be laid before both Houses of Parliament within seven days after the issue of the proclamation or, if Parliament be not then sitting, within seven days after the beginning of the next session, and shall be effectual unless and until both Houses of Parliament shall by resolutions passed in the same session request the Governor-General-in-Council to repeal the same, in which case they shall be repealed by proclamation.

2. The Prime Minister shall be charged with the administration of any territory thus transferred,

and he shall be advised in the general conduct of such administration by a commission consisting of not fewer than three members with a secretary, to be appointed by the Governor-General-in-Council, who shall take the instructions of the Prime Minister in conducting all correspondence relating to the territories, and shall also under the like control have custody of all official papers relating to the territories.

3. The members of the commission shall be appointed by the Governor-General-in-Council, and shall be entitled to hold office for a period of ten years, but such period may be extended to successive further terms of five years. They shall each be entitled to a fixed annual salary, which shall not be reduced during the continuance of their term of office, and they shall not be removed from office except upon addresses from both Houses of Parliament passed in the same session praying for such removal. They shall not be qualified to become, or to be, members of either House of Parliament. One of the members of the commission shall be appointed by the Governor-General-in-Council as vice-chairman thereof. In case of the absence, illness, or other incapacity of any member of the commission, the Governor-General-in-Council may appoint some other fit and proper person to act during such absence, illness, or other incapacity.

4. It shall be the duty of the members of the commission to advise the Prime Minister upon all matters relating to the general conduct of the administration of, or the legislation for, the said territories. The Prime Minister, or other Minister of State nominated by the Prime Minister to be his deputy for a fixed period, or, failing such

nomination, the vice-chairman shall preside at all meetings of the commission, and in case of an equality of votes shall have a casting vote. Two members of the commission shall form a quorum. In case the commission shall consist of four or more members, three of them shall form a quorum.

5. Any member of the commission who dissents from the decision of a majority shall be entitled to have the reasons for his dissent recorded in the minutes of the commission.

6. The members of the commission shall have access to all official papers concerning the territories, and they may deliberate on any matter relating thereto and tender their advice thereon to the Prime Minister.

7. Before coming to a decision on any matter relating either to the administration, other than routine, of the territories or to legislation therefor, the Prime Minister shall cause the papers relating to such matter to be deposited with the secretary to the commission, and shall convene a meeting of the commission for the purpose of obtaining its opinion on such matter.

8. Where it appears to the Prime Minister that the dispatch of any communication or the making of any order is urgently required, the communication may be sent or order made, although it has not been submitted to a meeting of the commission or deposited for the perusal of the members thereof. In any such case the Prime Minister shall record the reasons for sending the communication or making the order and give notice thereof to every member.

9. If the Prime Minister does not accept a recommendation of the commission or proposes to take some action contrary to their advice, he shall

state his views to the commission, who shall be at liberty to place on record the reasons in support of their recommendation or advice. This record shall be laid by the Prime Minister before the Governor-General-in-Council, whose decision in the matter shall be final.

10. When the recommendations of the commission have not been accepted by the Governor-General-in-Council, or action not in accordance with their advice has been taken by the Governor-General-in-Council, the Prime Minister, if thereto requested by the commission, shall lay the record of their dissent from the decision or action taken and of the reasons therefor before both Houses of Parliament, unless in any case the Governor-General-in-Council shall transmit to the commission a minute recording his opinion that the publication of such record and reasons would be gravely detrimental to the public interest.

11. The Governor-General-in-Council shall appoint a resident commissioner for each territory, who shall, in addition to such other duties as shall be imposed on him, prepare the annual estimates of revenue and expenditure for such territory, and forward the same to the secretary to the commission for the consideration of the commission and of the Prime Minister. A proclamation shall be issued by the Governor-General-in-Council, giving to the provisions for revenue and expenditure made in the estimates as finally approved by the Governor-General-in-Council the force of law.

12. There shall be paid into the Treasury of the Union all duties of customs levied on dutiable articles imported into and consumed in the territories, and there shall be paid out of the Treasury annually towards the cost of administra-

tion of each territory a sum in respect of such duties which shall bear to the total customs revenue of the Union in respect of each financial year the same proportion as the average amount of the customs revenue of such territory for the three completed financial years last preceding the taking effect of this Act bore to the average amount of the whole customs revenue for all the Colonies and territories included in the Union received during the same period.

13. If the revenue of any territory for any financial year shall be insufficient to meet the expenditure thereof, any amount required to make good the deficiency may, with the approval of the Governor-General-in-Council, and on such terms and conditions and in such manner as with the like approval may be directed or prescribed, be advanced from the funds of any other territory. In default of any such arrangement, the amount required to make good any such deficiency shall be advanced by the Government of the Union. In case there shall be a surplus for any territory, such surplus shall in the first instance be devoted to the repayment of any sums previously advanced by any other territory or by the Union Government to make good any deficiency in the revenue of such territory.

14. It shall not be lawful to alienate any land in Basutoland or any land forming part of the natives reserves in the Bechuanaland Protectorate and Swaziland from the native tribes inhabiting those territories.

15. The sale of intoxicating liquor to natives shall be prohibited in the territories, and no provision giving facilities for introducing, obtaining, or possessing such liquor in any part of

the territories less stringent than those existing at the time of transfer shall be allowed.

16. The custom, where it exists, of holding *pitsos* or other recognized forms of native assembly shall be maintained in the territories.

17. No differential duties or imposts on the produce of the territories shall be levied. The laws of the Union relating to customs and excise shall be made to apply to the territories.

18. There shall be free intercourse for the inhabitants of the territories with the rest of South Africa subject to the laws, including the pass laws, of the Union.

19. Subject to the provisions of this Schedule, all revenues derived from any territory shall be expended for and on behalf of such territory : Provided that the Governor-General-in-Council may make special provision for the appropriation of a portion of such revenue as a contribution towards the cost of defence and other services performed by the Union for the benefit of the whole of South Africa, so, however, that that contribution shall not bear a higher proportion to the total cost of such services than that which the amount payable under paragraph 12 of this Schedule from the Treasury of the Union towards the cost of administration of the territory bears to the total customs revenue of the Union on the average of the three years immediately preceding the year for which the contribution is made.

20. (Omitted.)

21. The members of the commission shall be entitled to such pensions or superannuation allowances as the Governor-General-in-Council shall by proclamation provide, and the salaries and pensions of such members and all other

expenses of the commission shall be borne by the territories in the proportion of their respective revenues.

22. The rights as existing at the date of transfer of officers of the public service employed in any territory shall remain in force.

23. Where any appeal may by law be made to the King-in-Council from any court of the territories, such appeal shall, subject to the provisions of this Act, be made to the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of South Africa.

24. The Commission shall prepare an annual report on the territories, which shall, when approved by the Governor-General-in-Council, be laid before both Houses of Parliament.

25. (Omitted.)

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